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*COURT ROYAL.*

A STORY OF CROSS CURRENTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'JOHN HERRING,' 'MEHALAH,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BROKEN OFF.



ON reaching home, Mr. Rigsby told his man to ask Miss Stokes to do him the civility of speaking with him in the study.

Miss Stokes came sailing in with great dignity, wondering what Mr. Rigsby could want to say to her at that time of the evening in private. Sisters-in-law cannot be kept for ever in the cold, she argued with herself.

'Would you mind shutting the door behind you?' asked Mr. Rigsby, as Miss Stokes had left it modestly ajar, and stood near it herself.

'Please come nearer. I have something I want very particularly to say to you.'

'I am at your service, James,'

said Miss Stokes, shutting the door and advancing one step.

'My dear Eliza,' began the planter, standing on the hearth with his back to the fire, 'the matter I wish to speak to you upon is a delicate one; between you and me, a very delicate one.'

'Indeed, James!'

'I have been a widower for some years.'

'Oh, James, you have, you have!'

'And I have had only my daughter to solace me in my loneliness. And now that daughter——'

'Is about to be translated to a loftier sphere.'

'In matters of the heart, Eliza—in matters of the heart—I mean—I am confused. I have had much to think of. I did not intend to speak now, but I thought it best to do so to-night instead of delaying longer.' Miss Stokes looked down. 'Won't you take a chair, my dear Eliza?' She gracefully sank into one near the table. 'You have been so good and devoted to Dulcinea, my dear Eliza, that I have considered I could not do better than take you—ahem!—take you——'

'Oh, James! I never, never dreamed of the happiness.'

'Take you into confidence before breaking the news to Dulcinea. How she will bear it I tremble to think.'

'Do not tremble, dear James. She is cordially attached to me, I may say she regards me—she has regarded me, though our respective ages hardly admit it, as a second mother.'

'Then I can trust you to break the painful news to her, can I not?'

'Not painful—do not say painful, James.'

'Indeed I hope and trust it will not be painful, but I greatly fear. Such deception, such heartlessness.'

'What deception? What heartlessness, James? Not on my side; I have been all frankness—too much heart.'

'I have been horribly deceived. It is all up with the engagement.'

'Up? which engagement?'

'Which? There has been only one. Dulcinea must forget Lord Saltcombe.'

'What—what?' exclaimed Miss Stokes, pushing her chair back and looking blank. 'I thought, James—but never mind what I thought.'

'If you thought anything else you thought wrong,' said he. 'It is all up with the engagement. We have been grossly imposed upon. The Marquis was hunting Dulcinea for her money; the

family of the Duke are in desperate straits, and at any moment the creditors may be down on them, turn them out of Court Royal, and sell house and lands.'

Miss Stokes stared.

'They were reckoning on paying their debts with my money—a pack of coroneted beggars! Lord Saltcombe does not care a snap of the fingers for Dulcina—he wanted only her money, and then when he had got that he would have deserted her. Bless my soul! Did I plant coffee, and slave for all these years away from my native land, sacrificing my life and disorganising my liver, to find money for a parcel of needy noblemen? Am I to send my dear Dulcina among wolves, who will tear from her the flesh and leave only the bones?'

'This is not possible, James.'

'It not only is possible, but it is so. I charged Lord Saltcombe with the beggarly trick to his face, and he was unable to answer me. He slunk from my presence like a whipped dog. Now, Eliza, how do you think my darling will bear the disappointment?'

'My dear James, you need not fear. That sweet Dulcina possesses so sound a judgment and so cool a head that I am sure, when all the circumstances have been placed before her, she will bear the loss like a martyr.'

'My poor dear! like a martyr. O my child! my child!'

'Do not be uneasy, James. I exercise great influence over Dulcina. I will break to her the news you have so graciously favoured me with. Perhaps you will talk to her yourself about it to-morrow, after breakfast.'

'I fear it will be a cruel disappointment.'

'Disappointments meet us poor women wherever we tread,' said Miss Stokes, with a sigh.

Next day at breakfast Mr. Rigsby was uncomfortable. He had not slept much, troubled with the thought of the distressing duty awaiting execution. At breakfast he crumbled his toast, upset his egg, and dawdled over his coffee. Dulcina looked limp and lachrymose.

When breakfast was over Miss Stokes went into the conservatory, so as to be out of hearing, yet near at hand. The time had arrived for the dreaded disclosure. How much had Miss Stokes already told Dulcina? The father wished he knew.

'Come and sit by me on the sofa, darling child,' he said.

'You are not looking well, I am sure you have been suffering. And now I have to increase your trouble by speaking on a most unsatisfactory subject.' He looked round at his daughter. Her face expressed no emotion. 'I am not a father who would stand in the way if his child desired something very much; the happiness of you, *Dulcina*, is paramount to every consideration. I do not know to what extent your affections have been engaged, whether your heart would break should Lord *Saltecombe* not—not—excuse the expression—come to the scratch. I have favoured your acquaintance with him because I have believed him an admirable match. But, my dear, all is not gold that glitters. It is, as the Latin grammar tells us, human to err. I have learned circumstances which have altered my view of Lord *Saltecombe*'s character, and made me doubt whether the engagement is to your advantage. I am a plain business man, and I look to the business side of everything. I have made inquiries, and my inquiries have dissatisfied me. The connection with the *Kingsbridge* family, the title, the position, that seemed so splendid that I was dazzled. But there are spots in the sun, craters in the moon, blots on ducal escutcheons.'

Miss *Rigsby* became uneasy, she looked at her father, then at the breakfast-table, then on the floor.

'I have learned, to my surprise, that the *Kingsbridge* family are bankrupt; they are living on the very verge of ruin. Only the hesitation of their creditors saves from a fall which will be a scandal throughout England.'

'Papa! I cannot think it.'

'I assure you, my darling, it is true. I have seen the list of mortgages. I know precisely the condition of their affairs. They are in the hands of the Jews. You saw the splendour in which they live. That is all paid for out of other people's money. They put on a glittering mask to cover ruin. The Marquis is penniless. If you marry him he will look to you for his pocket-money, for cigars, and tailor's bill—go to you whenever he wants a new pair of boots or a handkerchief. It is true you will receive his title, but in return you will maintain him like a poor relation.'

Mr. *Rigsby* kept his eyes fixed on his daughter whilst he spoke. He was afraid of her fainting, and he was ready to call Miss *Stokes* to his aid. But *Dulcina* listened to him with composure; she bit her lip and frowned, and ripped the binding off a cushion on the sofa, but said nothing.



'A handsome sum which I was prepared to pay over on your marriage would have gone at once to the Jews, to stop their greedy jaws and stave off the fall of the house. The Duke, the Marquis, Lord Ronald, and Lord Edward are calculating on my death, when they may use up the whole of my—that is, your fortune in washing clean the family estates. What those estates are likely to be worth in a few years, with bad seasons, and American corn and frozen meat coming in on all sides, I cannot say. I suppose about two per cent. You have now five or six on your capital. If your money goes into the land you are likely to lose half your income.'

He was silent. Presently Miss Rigsby said, 'Did they tell you this?'

'Bless my soul, no! The fine thing is that they are all so cavalier in their aristocratic ideas, that they regard the marriage of Saltcombe with you as a great condescension on their part. They will pocket your money and tolerate you.'

'Then they wanted to swindle us?' said Dulcinea.

'I wouldn't call it exactly a swindle. I believe they are far too grand to go into accounts. I dare say they do not know their desperate situation, but have a vague idea that they must have money to make them comfortable, and as you have money they will take you for the sake of your gold.'

Dulcinea's lips became pasty. She drew them together, and her hard eyes glittered like steel beads in the sun.

'Lord Saltcombe has never shown me much love. He has been civil, that is all. But Aunt Eliza said that in high society great people loved stiffly. It was against etiquette to be ardent.'

'Lord Saltcombe has not loved you. I asked him point-blank if he did, only last night, and he could not say he did.'

'Lord Saltcombe has not loved me!' exclaimed Dulcinea, with a vicious flash in her face. 'Do you mean to tell me he has not cared for *me*—that he has not admired *me*—that he has not courted *me*—that he has been peering into my pocket instead of my face all this while, thinking of my money, not of myself?'

'It is so.'

'Then I will have nothing to do with him.' Instead of Dulcinea fainting the tears sprang to her eyes, tears of offended vanity, not of pain. 'I'll have it out with Aunt Eliza, I will; she vowed he was frantic with love, and hardly knew how to control his passion. Oh, what a liar she is!'

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## INCURABLES.

AT Court Royal everything had settled down to the ordinary routine after the Rigsbys had gone. The Duke was glad that the stir was over, he liked to be quiet. Lord Edward had returned to his living in Somersetshire, to relieve the exemplary curate in the labour of blowing bubbles, and insisting on the *via media* as the way of salvation. Lord Ronald resumed his early walks and his simple amusements. He had a turning lathe at which he took exercise on rainy days, and turned out hideous wooden candlesticks and boxes covered with spirals. Of late he had taken to turning flower-pot stands for all his friends, stands that started and split and had to be thrown away after having been in use a week. His grandest achievement was hat-stands, frightful objects that stood six feet high, and bristled with sticks ending in knobs. These hat-stands were to be seen and were sold at all bazaars in the neighbourhood, and were bought by people out of consideration for the General—it would hurt his feelings, it was thought, if his hat-stands remained undisposed of. Every door leading to the open air in Court Royal, every bedroom, was provided with one of these erections. In the rooms they were serviceable, he argued, for ladies to hang their gowns on, for gentlemen to suspend their coats.

Lady Grace had one, of course, in her room, and used it with great conscientiousness. 'It is not pretty,' she said to Lucy, 'but it is well-intentioned. It must be good—dear uncle Roland made it. Things get rather dusty on it, though.'

'Do you not think, dear, that if chintz were hung round it like a tent, the ugliness might be disguised, and the dust kept off?'

Acting on Lucy's suggestion the hat-stand was enclosed in a structure designed and executed for it by the General himself, who turned the head and turned the foot, and tacked the chintz on it himself. Then Lady Grace took his grey head between her hands and kissed both his cheeks.

'That,' said Lord Ronald, 'is over-payment.'

Lord Ronald was vigorously engaged at his lathe turning two such hat and cloak stands out of rosewood, as a present for his nephew on his marriage. Each required twelve knobs for the

bristles and four knobs for the feet, and a big knob for the top, seventeen knobs in all; two stands, therefore, demanded thirty-four knobs. Lord Ronald had turned nineteen, which were ranged on the floor in strict order like cannon balls; he was engaged on knob number twenty when he heard a tap at the door, and, before he could answer, in came Mr. Worthivale, hot and frightened looking.

‘What is the matter, Worthivale? Is Court Royal a-fire?’

‘Oh, my lord, what is to be done? We are in a worse predicament than ever.’

‘It would be difficult to reach that.’

‘Really,’ exclaimed the excited steward, ‘I am driven wild. Has any news come from the Marquis? When will the marriage take place?’

‘I do not think the day is fixed.’

‘Has he written?’

‘He wrote once after reaching Plymouth. I have not seen the Duke this morning, so I cannot say whether his Grace has received a letter to-day. It is all right, don’t alarm yourself. The wedding must not be pressed on too hastily. My niece has had a note or two from Miss Rigsby, but they contained no news.’

‘I wish the wedding were to take place at once. I do not see how we are to hold on much longer without it.’

‘What is the matter now?’

‘The creditors and mortgagees are unreasonable. The Court Royal and Kingsbridge mortgages held by Mr. Emmanuel are called in. He will file a bill against us. We cannot possibly meet the call. It is as much as we can do to meet current expenses. Where are we to raise a penny? Bless my heart,’ said the steward, throwing himself into a chair, ‘here we were so happy and content, with the prospect before us of getting everything squared at our leisure, the Marquis marrying, and the more pressing calls stilled, when down on our heads comes this thunderbolt. File a bill against us in Chancery! Merciful heavens! What is the world coming to, with Radicalism, and democracy, and socialism, and American competition, cutting the throats of our farmers, and Fenian plots, and Nihilist desperadoes—and actually a request from Farmer Thomas to build him a silo that will contain sixty tons of ensilage. Why, my lord, it can’t be done under three to four hundred pounds, even if we use galvanised iron for the roof. Where are the four hundred pounds to come from at the present

moment, I should like to know? I have said we will think of it after the Marquis is married.'

'Who has threatened a bill in Chancery?'

'Crudge—Crudge, solicitor. He acts, apparently, for all those holding our mortgages. It is a plot, a wicked plot as desperate as any devised by Fenians.'

'Do not alarm yourself, Worthivale. The people have heard that Saltcombe is going to be married, and they are putting in their claims so as to be sure of their money.'

'But we must pay. The time is limited—three months—six months. Before a certain day the money must be forthcoming.'

'Well, Saltcombe will be married before that, and then he can easily get help from old Rigsby. There is no occasion for alarm. For Heaven's sake don't rush in on the Duke in the way you tumbled in upon me. Don't frighten him. He has no idea of the state of affairs. He is under the impression that a great deal of money has been saved by the quiet life we have been leading here for the last seven or eight years.'

'No money whatever has been saved. Before that the family was in a galloping consumption, now it is suffering from slow paralysis. When the Duke went to town every year the outlay was enormous, and debts accumulated annually at a rate that makes my head spin. Now we live up to our income—that is, to an income unburdened on every shoulder and joint of the spine. There is nothing saved. You cannot save on a deficit.'

'Well, whatever you do, take care not to trouble his Grace. He cannot bear it.'

'But, my lord, what am I to do?'

'Nothing; wait, and keep your counsel. Let the marriage take place, and all will be right. I'll manage matters with Mr. Rigsby.'

'But,' said the steward—'you will excuse the question—does Mr. Rigsby know the state of affairs?'

'I believe a word was said about some money being forthcoming at the marriage. I can't say that he was told everything. I did not have much talk with him. He saw a good deal of the Duke, but then the Duke knows nothing about this unfortunate matter. Leave the affair to arrange itself. If you like I will write to Saltcombe to press on the marriage.'

The confidence of the General partly reassured Mr. Worthivale.

'You think, then, that we need not be anxious?'

'Not in the least. I will manage matters with Rigsby. The old fellow will be flattered and proud to let us have the money. What are the mortgages called in?'

'All—all without exception. What can have taken the people I cannot conceive; what can they all want their money for simultaneously? It looks like a plot. If only two or three had given notice I should not have minded, but all—and all together! I cannot get over it. And Crudge acting for the lot—that is strange, is it not?'

'Well, never mind,' answered the General; 'we know the worst. It is best to swallow a pill whole, not to take it in bits.'

'But what is the sum to be paid over with Miss Rigsby? Will it suffice?'

'No matter if it does not. It will stop a gap. I tell you the old fellow will be pleased to be asked to let us have the money we want. Those sort of people are flattered by having favours asked of them. Besides, it will be for his own daughter. He cannot refuse. I will make all right with him.'

'If I may offer a suggestion, my lord, I would propose that you should see Mr. Rigsby at once. It is true we have been remiss about the payment of interest on the mortgages, and that may have frightened the holders. If we could pay off one or two at once it might allay the alarm of the rest, and they could be brought to withdraw their demands.'

'There is three months' grace,' said Lord Ronald—'plenty of time. Put the matter in the hands of our solicitor, let him write to this Crudge.'

'No solicitor in the world can save us. We must have money.'

'It really is too bad!' exclaimed Lord Ronald, losing his temper. 'It is your fault, Worthivale. You should not have allowed things to come to this pass. You have had the management of the estates; they are extensive. You should have drawn the purse-strings tighter.'

'My lord,' said the steward, hurt, 'I beg you to remember that I have preached retrenchment to deaf ears.'

'We have retrenched. We no longer go to town.'

'That was not enough.'

'Good Heaven! What would you have had us do, then?'

'Could not his Grace have gone abroad and shut up the Court?'

'Gone abroad!—to Boulogne, and herded with all the clipped and pinched wretches who hover there, like the spirits on the banks of Lethe, unable to come over because short of an obolus. No, thank you. There are limits below which we cannot descend.'

'What is to be done? Nothing can be done now. It is too late. Some years ago—perhaps. Now all is hopeless.'

'This is rank nonsense. Mr. Rigsby is rolling in money.'

'But can we be sure of getting him to apply it to our necessity?'

'Of course we can. I know we can.'

'What is he worth? We want a very large sum.'

'I do not know his income. Be at ease. He has plenty.'

Mr. Worthivale put his hands to his head. 'If it were not wicked and cowardly,' he said, 'I would blow out my brains.'

'If there is immediate pressure,' said the General, 'I will write to Edward—to Lord Edward; he is canon and archdeacon, and proctor in Convocation, and enjoys a fat rectory. I have no doubt he will help.'

'He has helped us already.'

'When? How?'

'Over and over again, but he wished me not to mention it to any of the family.'

'Bless my soul!' exclaimed Lord Ronald, 'I had no idea of that. Can I sell my interest in anything—my annuity?'

'If you sell your annuity, my lord, it must be paid, and now it is not.'

'I can sell my half-pay of general.'

'A drop into a bottomless gulf.'

'Then we must wait in patience for the marriage-bells. Now—not another word. I am going to the Duke.'

The steward sighed and withdrew.

'Stay a moment,' called the General as he was passing through the door. 'I hope, I trust, not a word of this has reached the ears of Lady Grace. I do suppose that you have not spoken of these painful matters to Lucy.'

'She does know something,' said Mr. Worthivale.

'Who? Lucy or Grace?'

'Lucy has been told that no unnecessary expense must be incurred. Remember she manages the housekeeping, and has the accounts in her charge. But, as she says, it is impossible to keep down the enormous outlay. The servants think it their duty to

blaze abroad the splendour of the house by lavish waste. The requirements of the establishment are very great.'

'I do hope Lucy will not by hint even let Grace suppose that there is trouble in the air.'

'Rely on her.'

'Then no one need know of this confounded worry except myself and Saltcombe. There, there, be of good cheer, the cloud is passing.'

Lord Ronald went to the Duke's apartments. He found his brother disturbed, his face was wanting in its wonted serenity.

'Ronald,' said the Duke, 'no letter again this morning from that provoking boy. I cannot understand it. In my day no son would have dreamed of leaving his father without notice of his proceedings. Can it be that love has turned his head? If so, the sooner he is married and brought to a sober mind and sense of his obligations, the better.'

'You see, brother,' said the General, 'ladies are exacting. No doubt Miss Dulcina is not happy without Herbert about her, and love-making is one of the labours of Hercules. When he comes home he is fagged, and fain to throw himself in a chair and go to sleep. Take my word for it—that is it. Miss Rigsby has only written twice to Grace, once a line of thanks for her reception here, the other a mere half-page of nothing, that took her one minute by the clock to write.'

'Nothing can excuse neglect of duty to a parent,' said the Duke. 'When I was young I was taught to discharge duty first, and take pleasure after. The spirit of this age is other; duties are blown away as feathered seeds, and only pleasure is regarded. I thought better of Herbert.'

'My dear Duke, you must excuse him. Love-making demoralises a man. It is like an election, it upsets everything. No doubt, now that Saltcombe has emerged from his chrysalis, he is flying about.'

'It would not take him ten minutes to write me a line. I am not exacting. I do not require four sides crossed, but I expect the recognition of what is due from a son to a father. I am put out.'

Lord Ronald had nothing to say to this.

'Hitherto,' continued the Duke, 'I have had no reason to complain of Herbert; he has been a respectful, obedient son. He was extravagant some years ago, and I have no doubt spent more money than was judicious, but it runs in the family. I was ex-



travagant at one time ; my father—as you may remember, Ronald—never stopped to consider what a thing cost if it took his fancy ; and my grandfather went to extremes in munificence. I should have been pained to see a mean, calculating spirit in Herbert. A gentleman must be open-handed.’

‘He has lived too quietly for some years. I am glad to see our comet run into sunlight again.’

‘Yes. Because I am too poorly to take my proper place in society, that is no reason why Saltcombe should live as a hermit. I shall insist, when he is married, on his being in town for the season.’

‘His wife will take care of that.’

‘I trust she will. I have been considering that he must have a residence of his own.’

‘Will he not live here ?’

‘Certainly not. I should like it, but it would hardly do. The Marquis and Marchioness must have their own country house, with no divided authority in it. I would not have Grace the guest of my daughter-in-law, nor my daughter-in-law the guest of Grace in Court Royal. No, Ronald, I have been thinking of Fowelscombe. The house is out of repair, but it is a fine place. The grounds are delightful, that glorious drive down through an avenue of beeches for over a mile, and then the charming old house below, nestling among trees—what can be more suitable for the young couple ? The house has been uninhabited for so long, and the grounds so neglected, that it will want a great deal doing to it. Still, some ten thousand pounds spent judiciously would make it comfortable.’

‘I am sure that Saltcombe would not wish it.’

‘Ronald,’ said the Duke, with some indignation, ‘unless the poisonous spirit of the age has infected Saltcombe more deeply than I anticipate, he will approve of whatever I ordain. I have written to an architect to examine and report on the condition of Fowelscombe, and I have requested a distinguished landscape gardener to look over the grounds and suggest improvements.’

‘But—my dear Duke.’

‘There is no *but* in the case—that is, no but is admissible. I wish it. That suffices.’

Lord Ronald looked down at his boots.

‘There is another thing,’ continued the Duke, ‘I wished to consult you about. I hear that the Revelstoke estates of the

Stretchleighs are to be sold. Our great-grandmother was a Stretchleigh, and it is unendurable to me to think that some brewer, or builder, or successful army tailor should come down and buy the property, and inhabit the house once the home of gentlemen. I am thinking of buying it.'

'Merciful powers!' exclaimed Lord Ronald.

'Why do you exclaim in this way? Is there anything exaggerated in this sentiment of respect for the home of our ancestors on the female side? Surely, Ronald, you are not touched with the utilitarian spirit of the age?'

'But—where is the money to come from?'

'Money can always be found for what is needful.'

'But this is hardly a necessity, brother.'

'Not a necessity, exactly, but almost a duty. All the country is invaded by rich tradesmen, and engineers who have been knighted for building bridges, and manufacturers out of the north. Our old country gentry are becoming extinct. I do my best to keep our neighbourhood select. There is no knowing what mischief a new man might do coming into our proximity. He would flood the country with nineteenth-century ideas, and subvert our tenants.'

'Have you spoken to Worthivale about this?'

'Not yet. I saw no need. He would combat it, of course. He is a good man, but narrow; pettifogging in his ideas, no breadth of view, always after reduction of outlay; never disposed to deal liberally with the tenants.'

'You have taken no step in the matter, I trust.'

'I cannot say that I have taken *no* step, but I have not yet bought the property. I have opened negotiations.'

'Do nothing, I entreat you—do nothing till after the marriage.'

'It may then be too late. The property may have passed into most objectionable hands.'

'Consult Saltcombe. Consult Edward. For Heaven's sake move no further without consideration.'

'I have considered. You are very strange this morning, Ronald. I do not understand your manner or your mood.'

'I am out of sorts. I am bewildered. Spend ten thousand on Fowelscombe and buy Revelstoke. Lord bless me!' He recovered his composure. 'Excuse me, Duke, you take me by surprise. Do nothing till I have had another talk with you about it.'

'My dear Ronald, what does it concern you whether I buy Revelstoke or not? I am buying to suit my own notions, and, though I value your opinions, I am not bound to submit to them. Now I really must attack my letters. I will detain you no longer. My conscience reproaches me for having taken up so much of your precious time; pray return to your turning of knobs.'

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

### A CARD CASTLE.

LORD RONALD returned to his room and spent the rest of the day in turning. The days were short, and he made the most of the little light. His hand wanted its usual steadiness, or his mind wandered to other matters; for he spoiled several of the knobs he worked at that afternoon.

He was engaged on the twenty-sixth in the gathering dusk when he heard a step behind him, and looked round. 'Mercy on me!' he exclaimed, and cut into and spoiled the twenty-sixth knob. 'What is the meaning of this?'

He saw the Marquis before him, worn, white, hollow-eyed. 'Good heavens, Saltcombe! How come you here? What has happened? What is the matter with you? Have you been ill?'

'Do not overwhelm me with questions, uncle,' answered Lord Saltcombe. 'I can answer but one at a time.'

'But this is amazing. Why have you not written? What do you mean by dropping on one from the sky without warning?'

'There, uncle, leave the lathe. I want a word with you. I have matters of importance to communicate. Come out of your workshop into the other room.'

'I am at your service. Merciful powers! what a pack of troubles and bewilderments come upon one all at once! First, Worthivale bursts in on me, then the Duke drops down on me, and now you spring on me like a ghost—my senses are stupefied or scared away. No bad news, I hope? Take that chair by the fire. How pale, how ill you look! Tell me the truth, Herbert, have you been sick?'

Lord Saltcombe shook his head.

'Your father is put out at your not writing. I thought that sickness might account for the neglect.'

'I have not been ill.'

'Then why have you not written? I found the Duke this morning in a tantrum about it. He will call you sharply to task. What have you been doing with yourself?'

'I am sorry if I have given my father pain. I would spare him every annoyance. What I have to communicate now is likely to disturb him. Miss Rigsby and I have not succeeded in liking each other more, the more we have seen of each other.'

'What? How? You don't mean to say—you!—you surely are not going to tell me——'

'That the engagement is at an end.'

Lord Ronald started. 'At an end! Herbert, you are out of your senses, or I am dreaming.'

'It is true. The engagement has been broken off. Mr. Rigsby must have picked up exaggerated reports of the state of our pecuniary affairs, and he began impertinently to catechise me about them. I could do no other than refuse to answer his questions.'

The General clasped his hands on his knees, wrung them, and groaned. 'Saltcombe! do you know that we have been building on your marriage? Do you know that without it we are hopelessly lost? Your marriage was the one cord to which we clung. That gone, we sink. There is no salvation anywhere.'

'I know it,' answered the Marquis, gloomily. 'I know more than that. We drag others who have trusted us into ruin along with us. But it cannot be helped. I have done my utmost. I am not to blame—not in this matter, at least. I did what was required of me. I constrained myself to be civil and play the lover to a girl I could not like, to one with whom I could not associate with any pleasure. I proposed to her. I never betrayed my feelings by a look, a gesture, or a word. I was prepared to make her my wife, and when she was my wife you may rely on me I would have failed in no duty towards her. But I could not endure to be treated with impertinence—not by such as Rigsby.'

'Rigsby treat you with impertinence! It is inconceivable, you have misunderstood him. I will go post-haste to Plymouth and explain matters, and effect a reconciliation. You must marry the girl, you must.'

'I cannot do so. Mr. Rigsby does not wish it. He has been frightened by gossip about our difficulties, and he thinks we will involve him and throw away his daughter's fortune.'

'But he ought to be proud, happy to contribute——'

‘Perhaps he ought, but he is not. On the contrary, he declines the honour.’

‘Heaven help us, we are lost! Do you know, Saltcombe, that some of the mortgages are called up, and unless we find the money we shall be compelled to sell? It is too dreadful!’

‘I have done what I could. To bear to be taken to task by that Mr. Rigsby exceeded my endurance.’

‘Did you break with him, or he with you?’

‘He came to me, as I believe, with the express purpose of bringing about a rupture. He charged us with being ruined, and wanting to stave off ruin with his money.’

‘That is true.’

‘It may be true, but it is impertinence to say it.’

‘So you flared up and upset the salt?’

‘I declined to be cross-questioned.’

‘What is to be done about conveying this news to the Duke? It must be done gently, lest it excite him and affect his heart.’

‘If you think best, uncle, that I should take all the blame on myself, I will do so. Let my father suppose me capricious, he will be annoyed, but it will pass. He did not look cordially on this engagement. He did not care for the connection. If he thinks that the planter broke it off his pride will be hurt, he will feel it as an insult, and that will agitate him profoundly. No; best let me bear the blame.’

Lord Ronald put his hand to his head. He was too bewildered to think; he looked at the Marquis, then at the fire, almost stupidly. Both were silent for some time.

‘I came in quietly, without being observed,’ said Lord Saltcombe. ‘I wished to have a word with you before I saw any one else. I had rather not meet Grace to-night.’

‘The Duke must be prepared for this. You have shaken me. I cannot collect my thoughts. We must telegraph for the Archdeacon. We shall want his advice. What a card castle we have been erecting, Saltcombe! and now with a puff it is down in ruins.’

‘I will go and sleep at the lodge. Beavis will give me a shakedown. I do not wish to meet Grace till I am more composed, and I do not want the news of my return to be carried to my father till you have prepared him.’

‘What am I to say? What can I say?’

‘Tell him that you have heard unpleasant tidings from Plymouth, and that you expect me to be back to-morrow.’

'I will do so. Good heavens, Saltcombe! will you believe it? the Duke, in sublime unconsciousness, is planning the outlay of ten thousand pounds on Fowelscombe and the purchase of Revelstoke. The only possible good I see in your return is that it will render the outlay on Fowelscombe unnecessary, and you must dissuade him from buying an acre at Revelstoke. There is no money—not one penny; and the mortgages on Court Royal and Kingsbridge are called up. What are we to do? Now go quietly and get Beavis to telegraph to the Archdeacon. My head is not clear enough in this whirl. He is a business man, and always knows what should be done.'

He paced the room. 'There is the first bell,' he said; 'I must dress for dinner. I will do what I can to prepare the Duke. Merciful powers! how much is demanded of me! I would rather command in an engagement with Afghans.'

When Lord Saltcombe had gone he dressed hastily, but was late when he came down. The second bell had rung. The Duke disliked unpunctuality. The General had never failed in this particular before.

'Why, Ronald,' he said, 'is the weather going to change? Are the heavens about to fall, that you come lagging after the time? Will you give your arm to Grace? I take in my little friend Lucy. What a small party we are! How is it the vicar and Mrs. Townley have not been invited, or Beavis, or the Sheepwashes, or some one? I dislike an empty table. Now Saltcombe is away the party is reduced so low that conversation flags. With the best intentions and the most brilliant wits we must suffer from exhaustion of topics. Grace, have you heard from that tiresome brother of yours who is too enamoured to write?'

The brilliantly lighted dining-room, the fire of oak on the hearth burning merrily, the glittering silver and glass on the table, the flowers that adorned it, yellow alamandas and maiden-hair fern laid on the white cloth; the buff and scarlet footmen—the general brightness, comfort, beauty, struck the General as it had never struck him before, conscious as he was of the desperate situation of affairs. He was out of spirits. He had not dressed with his usual care, his tie was twisted, one of his cuffs was *minus* a stud, and slipped over his hand. The Duke observed his troubled looks, but said nothing. He thought he had been too short with his brother in the forenoon, and regretted it. This, no doubt, was distressing Lord Ronald. Lady Grace was always quiet; she

could talk pleasantly, but lacked the power of originating and keeping up a conversation. Lucy threw herself into the gap; she was skilful to maintain a conversation, and give it a fillip when it flagged. An invaluable person at table when spirits were low.

'You good little maid,' said the Duke, 'you are to me an unfailing source of admiration. Always lively, with your dark eyes sparkling, and your fresh cheek blooming, and your tongue never lacking a happy speech.'

'It could not be otherwise, your Grace, when you are always flattering,' said Lucy.

When Lady Grace and Miss Worthivale retired the Duke passed the port to his brother. 'You never touch claret, I think?' Then, noticing that Lord Ronald's hand shook as he filled his glass, he asked, 'What ails you, Ronald, to-day? You look out of sorts.'

'I have received unpleasant news from Plymouth.'

'From Plymouth!' repeated the Duke. 'Not a letter from Saltcombe, surely?'

'No, Saltcombe has not written to me, but I have heard something affecting him which I do not like.'

'What do you mean? Is he ill?'

'No, not that.'

'What is it, then?'

'I don't fancy his love-making is proceeding smoothly.'

'The course of true love never did run smooth,' said the Duke. 'Lovers always fall out, and make up their quarrels next day. That is a commonplace in Cupid's maxims.'

'I don't mean that,' said the General. He was uneasy: strict in his ideas of right and wrong, he was unskilled to act a part and speak half the truth. He turned hot, then cold.

'What is it, then?'

'I believe Dulcinea Rigsby dresses very badly.'

'I did not like her taste here, but that is a matter for ladies to consider, not men. For my part, I think the modern fashions detestable.'

'I hear she makes herself ridiculous by her outrageous style.' The Duke frowned.

'Of course Saltcombe does not like his future wife to become the laughing-stock of Plymouth.'

The Duke pushed his glass from him. 'Ronald,' he said, 'this is intolerable. A future Marchioness of Saltcombe the—the laughing-stock—do you know what you are saying?'



The General crossed his legs, then uncrossed them, leaned back in his chair, filled his glass again, took some candied angelica, and said, looking uncomfortable and nervous, 'Saltcombe is sensitive. He cannot stand that sort of thing. I hear he will be home to-morrow.'

'Saltcombe—here! Do you mean to hint that the engagement is off?'

'I know nothing definitely. I can't say absolutely off, past all patching up. You can understand that if Miss Dulcina Riggsby gives herself airs unbecoming a lady, Saltcombe will feel it. The old father, too, the coffee-planter, is a rough stick, and perhaps does not know how far liberties are allowed on the footing on which he stands.'

The Duke looked grave. He picked some grapes and ate them. Then he said, 'Saltcombe knows what befits his position. She who is to be Duchess of Kingsbridge when I am gone must not be an object of ridicule. If she were a princess of blood royal, and failed in tact, she would be unworthy to wear our strawberries. Not for the world would I do what is wrong, not for ten thousand worlds would I excite a jeer.' He paused. 'You think Herbert will return. Very well. He will do what is right. I shall be glad to see him. You think the match is broken off. I am content. The house of Kingsbridge does not want Rigsbys to prop it up. Let us rejoin the ladies.'

In the meantime Lady Grace and Lucy were sitting side by side on the sofa in the drawing-room. Grace had her arm round Lucy's waist, and Lucy held a screen to cut off the red firelight from her friend's face.

'How lively you are to-day, Lucy!' said Lady Grace. 'I do not know what it was at dinner that put my father and uncle out of spirits, and observing them I lost the desire to talk; but you flew to the rescue, and rattled on, and forced us all to laugh; and now I feel your heart; you are quivering with animation. What is it, Lucy? I have not found you in such buoyant humour for many a day.'

'Shall I tell you a secret?'

'If pleasant.'

'It is excellent. I am sure it will rejoice you.'

'Then do tell me.'

'What will you pay me for it?'

'I will give you a kiss.'

'I will pour out my whole heart's contents for that.'

'Then do not tantalise me. What is it?'

'What do you wish best of all?'

Lady Grace slightly coloured.

'You do not like Miss Rigsby, do you?' asked Lucy.



'Oh, Lucy! don't ask such a question.'

'I do not. I detest her, a nasty, spoiled, conceited piece of goods, without fresh feeling, without good taste, without healthy brains.'

'You must not say that,' said Lady Grace.

'I must and I will. I could not do so before. I can now.' Her eyes danced, the dimples came in her pretty rosy cheeks, and

her lips quivered. 'Only think! Lord Saltcombe is home. It is all off.'

'Herbert home!' exclaimed Lady Grace. 'What is off?'

'The engagement. Broken off, and a good thing too. I am heartily glad, and could dance for joy. So could you. You never liked her. You never thought her worthy of Lord Saltcombe.'

'Oh, Lucy!' Lady Grace stood up. She was nervous with excitement. 'Oh, dear Lucy, is this so? How do you know it?'

'It is quite true. Are you not glad?'

Lady Grace hesitated and looked into the fire. 'I do not know what to say. I hope he has not behaved badly. I cannot think that he has. Yet the breaking off of the engagement can hardly come from her. She seemed very fond of him.'

'You may be quite sure Lord Saltcombe would not do what is wrong. I know nothing about how it came about, I only know that it is so. You never liked her, did you?'

'No. I did my utmost to become attached to her, but I could not. How did you hear of this?'

'Through my father.'

'Did Lord Saltcombe write to him? Herbert has not deigned to send me a line since he left.'

'Lord Saltcombe is at our house.'

'Oh, Lucy!'

'He did not like to appear here till Lord Ronald had prepared the Duke's mind.'

'Oh, Lucy! I wonder how he bears it. Do you think he was fond of her?'

'I cannot believe it.'

'Lucy! Nor do I. What is the meaning of this? I am like a deaf person at a play, or as one who comes in at the second act and sees much movement, but is unable to lay hold of the threads of the plot. Uncle Edward, Aunt Elizabeth, Uncle Ronald, all seemed to me bent on this marriage. Beavis advised it. What made it so desirable? I asked Beavis at the ball, but he would tell me nothing. I am afraid this rupture will disappoint them. Uncle Ronald's face and cuff at dinner showed me he was disturbed. Why is he disturbed? What is there so attractive in Dulcinea Rigsby?'

Instead of answering these questions Lucy said, 'My father says that Lord Saltcombe is looking wretchedly ill, so white, and hollow under the eyes.'

'Lucy! I must see him. Amuse the Duke whilst I run to the lodge. I cannot bear that my brother should be there unhappy and unwell, and I not see him and know the reason of his distress and sickness. I shall not be gone long. Make some excuse for my absence.'

In a very few minutes Lady Grace was in the park. She was in pale blue silk evening dress; she had thrown a cloak over her shoulders, and a light knitted woollen shawl over her head. The deer started as she passed, but when they heard her voice they came after her, thrusting their noses against her hand. She walked quickly, and when she reached the steward's lodge a little colour was in her delicate cheeks.

'Emily,' she said to the maid who opened the door, 'is Lord Saltcombe here?'

'Yes, my lady. He is in the study with Mr. Beavis.'

'They will excuse my interrupting them,' she said, passed down the passage, lightly tapped at the door, and in another moment was in her brother's arms. Beavis withdrew, but not before Lady Grace, who never forgot what was due to every one, had put her hand into his and thanked him with her eyes. Her heart was too full to speak. The fine lips were quivering, and tears were trembling in her eyes like dew in the calyx of a flower.

She made her brother stand away from her at arm's length and looked at him.

'Oh, Herbert!' she said, in a low plaintive voice, 'you have suffered. Oh, my dear, dear brother, I must know all. You cannot conceive the pain it is to me to be shut out from all the mysteries that surround you. You have no one but me, I none but you, who can perfectly understand and feel for each other. Tell me everything. You have not been ill in body. You have been ill in mind. Lucy will not be candid with me, and she knows more than I. Beavis only bids me trust him. My uncle Roland is unapproachable. I must come to you. I cannot bear it. I cannot. Dear Herbert! as you love me, tell me everything.'

'Sit down, Grace.'

'No, I cannot; I must not stay. I can rest neither here nor anywhere, not on my bed, till the key is put in my hands. I lie awake thinking and puzzling till I fear I shall go mad. Anything is better than this uncertainty. Why are you unhappy? Why have you all made such a point of this marriage? Why is

Uncle Roland so upset because it is broken off? What did Beavis see in her to urge you to make her your wife?’

‘I cannot tell you, Grace.’

‘You must, Herbert. I will no longer be left in doubt.’

‘Even the Duke does not know.’

‘So I perceive. He alone has been indifferent.’

‘You must be spared what would give you pain.’

‘I do not ask to be spared. If you have a cross laid on your shoulder which is weighing you down, shift one arm to my shoulder and give me your hand, we will carry it together. I am brave, Herbert. I can bear anything. Only one thing at a time, Herbert: first tell me—did you love *Dulcina*?’

‘I was determined to do so; I did my best, but I could not. Love will not be forced.’

‘I am glad to hear you say that. Your conduct is made doubly inexplicable now. Why did you propose to her?’

Lord Saltcombe hesitated. After a while, during which she waited with patience, he said, looking down, ‘Very well, Grace, know all. We are ruined. The marriage was arranged in the hopes of saving us from going to pieces. The Rigsbys are very rich.’

‘Is that all?’ asked Lady Grace, with a sigh of relief.

‘All!’ echoed Lord Saltcombe. ‘Ruin—our ruin proclaimed by every newspaper throughout England, the loss of our property, the sale of Court Royal.’

‘It will kill papa.’

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### THE COUNCIL OF COURT ROYAL.

THE first council of which we have given the acts was of a private nature. It had no pretensions to œcumenicity. It was a synod, not a council. It had been convoked in the interests of the Kingsbridge House, but had been attended by the Worthivale family only.

The aspect of affairs was now so desperate that a council was summoned to meet as soon as Lord Edward arrived from Sleepy Hollow.

The steward had called his son to his aid, and Beavis had

gone carefully through the accounts—not an easy task, for his father was unsystematic.

‘What we want,’ said Mr. Worthivale, ‘is to gain time. Give us a little space in which to look about, and we will find another wealthy heiress for Lord Salcombe. There are as good fish in the sea as they that come out of it.’ He clung to this forlorn hope.

Beavis spent several days over the accounts. He examined all the mortgages, the notes of hand; he investigated the expenditure in its several branches, and brought all into form. His time in a lawyer’s office stood him in good stead. He had acquired system, and a power of analysis lacking in his father.

Lord Edward arrived. To her great regret, Lady Elizabeth was unable to accompany him. Lent was approaching, and she had to arrange the services and appoint the preachers. Moreover, it was thought unadvisable for her to be away just then. A faint and hectic tinge of opinion had manifested itself in the pellucid brain of the excellent curate.

Whilst Beavis was at work his father continually interrupted him with explanations that were unnecessary, apologies for his own conduct that were uncalled for, and proposals that were inadmissible.

‘Lord Ronald spoke rather sharply to me the other day,’ he said. ‘He almost laid the blame on me for having got the family into such a condition.’

‘You have no occasion for self-reproach,’ said Beavis. ‘If it had been possible to effect anything, you would have done it. You have, indeed, done for them more than you should. Lucy’s money——’

‘Now, no more on that point,’ interrupted his father. ‘We shall have it again, certainly.’

‘The only thing that could have saved the family was a plain and bald statement of its difficulties and desperate condition, and that they would have refused to listen to. They buoy themselves up on hopes that are fallacious, and trust to a Providence to save them that expects every man to take the first steps towards saving himself.’

‘Heaven knows I have preached retrenchment, but my words have been unheeded. Now take the books under your arm and come with me. They will be assembled by this time.’

Father and son walked through the park to Court Royal.

Neither spoke; their thoughts depressed them. They entered the General's private sitting-room, and saw there Lord Edward, Lord Ronald, and the Marquis. At the door was Lady Grace. She put up her hand to stay Beavis. 'Please let me in also. Saltcombe has told me a little, I want now to know all.'

He hesitated, but without waiting for a refusal she passed in.

'Grace!' exclaimed Lord Ronald, 'this may not be. It is rude to show a lady the door, but I cannot help myself when business is in consideration.'

'I know what the business is,' she answered, 'and I am interested in it as well as you.' She ran to the Archdeacon, and nestled on a stool at his side, took his right arm and put it over her shoulder. 'Uncle Edward, speak a word for me.'

'Let her stay,' said the Archdeacon. 'A woman's wit is sometimes worth more than a man's wisdom.'

'Thank you, uncle!' She pressed his hand.

The General occupied a hard chair with a straight back. He had crossed his legs and folded his arms. His face was grave and set. The Archdeacon sat in a lounging chair and kept his arm round his niece, sometimes raising his wrinkled hand to stroke her smooth hair. Lord Saltcombe stood in the window looking out. The steward opened proceedings by describing the condition of the finances. Two mortgages had been already called up, and another he feared every day would be so. Those already noted were on Court Royal and Kingsbridge. Rumour had no doubt been busy with their name, for bills had poured in from all quarters, tradesmen's bills pressing for immediate payment. Probably the bad times, the fall in the value of land, and threatened legislation menacing land, had alarmed the mortgagees. As he went on he became confused, repeated himself, appealed to figures and read them wrong, and involved the case to such an extent that when he sat down none who had heard him were wiser than when he stood up.

Beavis had his chair near his father. He was distressed at the old man's inability to put clearly what he had to say, due to his inability to think clearly. He listened with patience, and when he had done he said, 'I have gone most carefully through all the accounts, have drawn up a table of debts, and a list of the mortgages and bills. I know exactly what the expenditure has been in every department during the last three years, also what the assets have been. Everything is here, *en précis*, on the table,



in so simple a form that a child can understand it. The situation is one from which extrication is only possible by having recourse to heroic methods. If the family difficulties had been considered in time, salvation might not have been so difficult as it is now.

‘Come, come!’ said the Archdeacon, sharply, ‘don’t exaggerate.’

‘I am not exaggerating, my lord. May I pass these papers to you? You can convince yourself that I am speaking within the mark.’

‘What is the amount absolutely necessary?’ asked Lady Grace in a calm, low tone.

‘Oh, Lady Grace,’ said Beavis, hastily, ‘you ought not to be here. You unnerve me.’

‘Let my presence rather brace you to declare the whole truth. Deal plainly with us. The surgeon’s hand must not tremble when he touches the wound.’

‘I need not enumerate all the mortgages,’ continued Beavis. ‘The heaviest is that of four hundred thousand on the Loddiswell property, the annual interest on which is sixteen thousand. That is just six thousand above what we are now drawing from the estates thus charged. This is in the hands of an Insurance Company, and is not called in. Seventy thousand was raised for the building of Court Royal. We have a little mortgage on Charlecombe. Neither of these is notified.’

‘Of course not,’ interrupted the steward.

‘There is a smaller, much smaller mortgage on the manor of Kingsbridge of four thousand five hundred. As you may know, though his Grace is Lord of the Manor of Kingsbridge, he has very little property in the place itself. A higher mortgage could not be got on that. This is at four and three quarters. So is that for forty-six thousand pounds on Court Royal itself. These two are in the hands of a Mr. Emmanuel, and he has given notice that they must be paid within three months. There is another, on Alvington, which we fear will also have to be met. It is not in the same hands, but in those of another Jew.’

‘Well,’ said Lord Ronald, ‘fifty-five thousand pounds is not so prodigious a sum. I suppose these two mortgages can be transferred.’

‘I do not think it. Remember that Court Royal is nearly all park—park and pleasure-ground bring in no rents.’

‘Then some other mortgages must be imposed. If Court Royal and Kingsbridge be relieved, what matter?’

'We cannot afford to do that; besides, investments of this sort are looked shyly at now.'

'What is the total of the annual charges on the property?' asked the Archdeacon.

'Twenty-four to twenty-five thousand.'

'And the income?'

'At present under thirty-five thousand.'

'Then—living on ten thousand.'

'No—dying on it, my lord.'

A dead silence ensued. Lady Grace's eyes were fixed on Beavis. Lord Saltcombe looked through the glass into the park, where the rooks were wheeling and dancing round their nests, which they were repairing with twigs, and stopping with tufts of pine shoots.

'I have not deducted the annual cost of the property, the rates, taxes—nor the Duke's thousand.'

'It is the deuce of a mischief that the marriage has fallen through,' said the General. 'That would have set us on our feet again.'

Lord Saltcombe still said nothing.

'If no one has a suggestion to make,' said Beavis, 'I will venture to make one. No one can doubt that I am heart and soul devoted to the cause of your illustrious house. I beg you to listen to me with patience if I am forced to say what is unpleasant. I know the pride, the legitimate pride, of the family. It is this pride which has allowed it to slip into such straits. With a little more readiness to look at facts, and accommodate itself to circumstances, the financial position of the family would have been convalescent, and we should not now be wondering whether life or death is heavier in the scale of fate. Love of splendour, reckless improvidence, have made the deficit grow in geometrical proportions. Firmness—excuse my saying it—courage to grapple with the evil, have been wanting, and the evil has grown to such a head that it is almost past grappling with.'

'Really, Mr. Beavis Worthivale,' said the General, testily, 'you forget our grey hairs. You are a young man, and you are lecturing men old enough to be your grandfathers.'

'I think, Mr. Beavis, you are too strong in your expressions,' said the Archdeacon.

His father, shocked beyond power of speech, seized him by the arms, and held up his hand in warning to be cautious.

'He is right,' said Lady Grace. 'Uncle Ronald, do not be angry. He speaks the truth because he is too true a friend to withhold it from us.'

Beavis slightly bowed to her, and went on, 'Safety may yet be had, but at a price. The only possible way out of the labyrinth of debt is for the Duke and the Marquis to resolve on the sale of some of the estates. Unfortunately, a worse time for the sale of land could not have befallen us. I believe that good properties do not now fetch five-and-twenty years' purchase, and some are put up to auction and find no buyers. Still, let us hope for the best. Fowelscombe is worth two thousand a year; at thirty years' purchase that would be sixty thousand; add another ten thousand for the house and timber and exceptionally beautiful situation, that makes seventy thousand. With that you can pay off Mr. Emmanuel and one of the other smaller mortgages. I should advise, sell also the manorial rights in Kingsbridge. The town will buy those, and give a good price for them.'

'Really! really!' exclaimed the General, 'I cannot endure this. Sell the manor from which the Duke takes his title! What next?'

'Expenses will have to be cut down at least a half, the number of servants reduced, and the Marquis must make up his mind to continue living in the country, and keeping Kingsbridge House, Piccadilly, closed.'

'Put a bill in the window, "To be let furnished," and so make a few guineas,' gasped the General.

Lady Grace got up from her stool and put her arm through that of Lord Ronald, and remained at his side, holding his hand. Her touch soothed him and allayed his irritation.

'The Duke will never consent to this,' said Lord Edward.

'It will not do even to suggest it to him. So much of the family property has been thrown away by our ancestors, that he is particularly tenacious on this point. Nothing will induce him to part with an acre.'

'He is talking of buying Revelstoke, not of selling,' said Lord Ronald.

'Remember,' said Beavis, 'if he will not voluntarily part with Fowelscombe, he will have Court Royal taken from under his feet and over his head. There is a power of sale in all mortgages.'

'They will not dare to do it,' exclaimed the General: 'the whole country would rise up and cry shame.'

'What do a parcel of Jew money-lenders care about the feelings of the country?' said Beavis. 'Besides, you mistake. The country would approve. It would cry shame on the house of Eveleigh for not making a voluntary effort to pay its debts.'

Lord Ronald's fingers nipped the hand of Lady Grace convulsively, and so sharply as to cause her pain. His face quivered,



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and he prepared to say an angry word, when she laid her other hand on his lips.

'Mr. Beavis is quite right,' she said; 'I feel that he is. We should do everything in our power to pay our debts, and not lie, curled up in our pride like hedgehogs, for the dogs to worry.'

The General turned to his brother. 'Edward,' he said, 'we look to you for advice. These hot-headed, rash young folk would fire the stack to expel the mice. You are a man of experience, with a business head. What do you propose?'

'There is nothing like moderation,' said the Archdeacon. 'I object to all extremes, doctrinal or practical. Let us be *via media* in all we do and propose. I agree with you, Mr. Beavis, that something must be done. I think with you, Ronald, that his proposal is too drastic. My suggestion is quite other. Let Mr. Worthivale write to the mortgagees or their agents—I mean those who are pressing, and those likely to be troublesome—and ask for delay. It would not be wise to sell land just now. Mr. Beavis said as much. The present depression cannot last. The wheat-producing area in America is rapidly being taken up, and the soil is becoming exhausted, at the same time that the population of America is increasing, and therefore the home consumption is greater. We want nothing but delay. Invite the two or three disagreeable mortgagees to a meeting at the lodge, and we shall see what will be the result. I shall make a point of being there.'

Beavis gathered the papers together. His cheeks were flushed.

'Saltcombe has not spoken,' exclaimed Lord Ronald, 'yet he is the one most concerned.'

'I bow to the superior wisdom of my uncles,' answered the Marquis, 'though I agree with Beavis. I do not, however, see any chance of persuading the Duke to a sale.'

'I think with you, Herbert, in this as in all things,' said Lady Grace. 'Let us have amputation before mortification sets in.'

At that moment a tap at the door, and the Duke's valet entered hastily, looking frightened.

'My lords,' he said, 'his Grace is not well! Something has happened!'

(To be continued.)

### THE NEW STAR IN ANDROMEDA.

Two hundred years ago the appearance of a new star would have caused widespread consternation and forebodings of the end of the world, or of some great and universal calamity. Two thousand years ago it would have been but the deification of another hero. To-day, however, the appearance of a new star only excites the curiosity of a few scientific men, while the bulk of the 30,000,000 folk, 'mostly fools,' as Carlyle says, are hardly aware of its existence.

The first intimation of the discovery is conveyed in the Dun Echt circular No. 97, where it is stated that Prof. Krueger telegraphed from Kiel, midnight, August 31, 'Variation in Andromeda nebula found by Dr. Hartwig of Dorpat: starlike nucleus.'

This undoubtedly was the announcement which first called general attention to the star, though it seems that Mr. I. Ward reports having seen it as early as August 19. Other observers also saw it independently about August 30. Fortunately there is no doubt that this is a new star, for none of the maps show any star in that part of the nebula. Also we are fortunate in having a photograph of the nebula taken a year ago by Mr. A. Common, in which there is no trace of a star where the one in question now appears, though other far fainter stars are clearly shown elsewhere in the nebula. It may then be taken as proved that this is a *bonâ fide* new star, or at any rate has become visible now for the first time.

And now there comes the question, Whence is it and what has caused it? Has the Great Spirit of the Universe made another sun from nothing? Has the command again gone forth, 'Let there be light,' with the same result as Moses saw, or whence is this strange new light? A hundred years ago the idea of a sudden creation of a new world from nothing would have been a satisfactory explanation, and a proof that the Deity was still working out the architecture of heaven. And so He may be: but science now steps in; and, not content with the bare statement, 'God made it,' would fain know how it was made, what were the foundations, what the material, and what the forces at work. Let us then see

first the facts as observed up to the present, and then what explanation, if any, science can offer.

As already stated, the new star was first announced on August 31. As early as July last, however, several observers had noticed a very perceptible brightening of the old nucleus of the nebula, so much, says Mr. Tarrant, as to suggest a faint star shining through. The Dun Echt observers located the new star 1.6 s. preceding and 5" south of this nucleus. Several observers think the nebula on the side preceding the new star is less bright, while on the following side is a 'knot of light,' or a 'faint brush of light,' as it is variously described. It is agreed that the new star has varied in appearance since first discovered, for on September 3 it was clear and distinct, on September 4 hazy, and since then distinct again. It has also decreased in magnitude since September 3. Knobel says on September 4 it was  $\frac{4}{10}$  of a magnitude less bright than September 3, and by September 9 it had decreased by another  $\frac{5}{10}$  of a magnitude. He places it 20" from the real nucleus of the nebula. At first all agreed in describing its spectrum as exactly like that of the nebula—namely, quite continuous with a sudden degradation of light at the red end. Later, however, Lord Rosse and others think they have seen a bright line in the spectrum on the more refrangible side of the D line.

Perhaps the first question that deserves attention is one on which considerable difference of opinion prevails—namely, is the new star really or only apparently within the Andromeda nebula? On previous occasions when new stars have appeared, two out of three have been connected with nebulae—namely,  $\eta$  Argûs in the keyhole nebula, and the new star of 1876 in a nebula in Cygnus, which makes it rather probable that for some reason new stars generally belong to nebulae. But the continuous spectrum of the Andromeda nebula shows conclusively that it is not a true gaseous nebula, and up to now it has been tacitly assumed to be a galaxy of suns innumerable, so distant that the most powerful telescope fails to distinguish them as separate stars; another universe, so to speak, almost infinitely removed from our universe, and appearing like a small faint cloud-light. But the new star was of the 7th magnitude,<sup>1</sup> and, if it be in such a distant universe, must be 30,000 million times as large as our sun, which is almost inconceivable; moreover, the energy expended on the star during the last month must be equal to all the energy expended on our

<sup>1</sup> At the end of October it had decreased to about the 10th magnitude.



sun for hundreds of thousands of years. No wonder, then, that astronomers stand aghast at the idea, and begin to doubt whether the star is really in the nebula. May it not be much nearer to us than the nebula, and only by a mere accident in the same line of vision? The spectroscope answers, almost without hesitation, 'No,' the star and the nebula are physically connected. The spectra of the nebula and the star are both continuous and peculiar for a sudden cutting-off of the red rays. Such a spectrum is unique, and it is highly improbable that so unusual a spectrum could be shown by two bodies unless they were intimately connected. It may then be concluded that the new star is actually in the nebula. Two alternatives then present themselves. Must we still suppose the nebula to be a galaxy quite separate from ours, and therefore the new star to be of such a size as to surpass all else we know of in the heavens, or is it not more likely that the nebula is within our own galaxy after all, and therefore much nearer than has been hitherto supposed? If the latter be the case, as seems more probable, then the new star need not be so inconceivably vast, and, moreover, the idea of other galaxies than ours will have been considerably shaken.

Having seen, then, that the new star is actually within the nebula of Andromeda, and that the nebula is much nearer in all probability than hitherto supposed, let us see what reasons can be assigned for the sudden appearance of this new star.

First, then, distinction must be drawn between really new stars—that is, freshly created stars and variable stars. What we call new stars may be, and in many cases are, undoubtedly only extreme cases of variables. Is, then, the Nova of Andromeda a newly-born sun, or is it in middle-life; and, if in middle life, why has it *only now* become visible to us?

Of the birth of suns one theory alone presents itself—the nebular theory. Briefly it is this: that there exist in space huge masses of luminous gaseous matter, true nebulae, which, while radiating heat, are under the force of gravity slowly contracting and becoming in the course of millions of years luminous solids, and then gradually cooling down till they become cold, dark, and dead like our moon. The wonderful spiral nebula in Canes Venatici is pointed to as an instance showing the condensation of nebulous matter into distinct foci. Can this theory, then, account for the new star in Andromeda? Unhesitatingly we answer 'No,' and for three reasons: first, the theory states the condensation to be

slow and gradual, whereas the new star attained its present brightness in the course of certainly less than a year, and probably in less than a month; and even if we take into account the critical point where the condensation of gases is suddenly accelerated, certainly this short time would not satisfy the demands of the theory. Secondly, the continuous spectrum of the Andromeda nebula does not give evidence of gaseous matter sufficient to form a huge sun like the new star must be, however near we suppose it to be. And thirdly, the spectrum of the star being the same as that of the nebula seems to argue that both the nebula and the star are in nearly the same stage of their existence. Nay, rather, seeing that the Andromeda nebula in all probability is a vast collection of luminous meteoric bodies, it might be urged that the new star must be much older than these meteoric bodies for it to give the same spectrum, because large masses of gas take longer to cool down to solid or liquid form than small masses.

Thus, then, the nebular theory affords no explanation of the sudden appearance of this star.

It may be suggested that it is the result of the collision of two large bodies of matter, moving in space cold and dark, but suddenly rendered hot and luminous by the force of collision; two dead worlds perhaps clashing together and suddenly uniting to form one blazing sun. Such is indeed a tremendous possibility, though no instance can be certainly named. Here, again, the similarity of the new star's spectrum to that of the nebula precludes this.

So far, then, we have seen there are two ways in which stars may be made, neither of which will account for the new star in Andromeda. Therefore, unless there be some other method of creation unknown to us, we are forced to conclude that the Nova is not in reality a new star, but only a variable star, hitherto too faint to be seen, and we may well ask the question, What is the cause of its sudden brightness? Numerous theories are offered to account for the variability of certain stars, some of which will be mentioned to see if they will account for this special star's appearance.

First, then, if a star in its course passes through a region where meteoric matter abounds, it is possible that such matter may fall on it in such quantities and with such impetus as very greatly to increase the star's light and heat; so that a star previously invisible to us may become bright enough to be seen. If such region of meteoric matter be isolated, the increased brightness of the star, besides being temporary, may never occur again.

But if there be a regular zone of meteors crossing the star's orbit, like that through which the earth passes in November, but on a larger scale, then there will be a periodical waxing and waning of the star's light. Such may be the partial cause of  $\eta$  Argus changing every 46 years from 4th to 1st magnitude, and of R Cephei changing every 73 years from 11th to 5th magnitude. In the case of the temporary star in Cassiopeia in 1572, which suddenly became so bright as to be visible at noon, it is possible we have a variable star of long period; for a similar star appeared in 945, and again in 1264, in the same part of the sky. If so, we may expect its reappearance soon. If this were the cause of the new star of 1876 in the Swan, the fall of meteoric matter must have been immense, for the star was actually reduced to the gaseous state, and faded into a nebulous form, showing in its spectrum the lines of hydrogen, nitrogen, and another unknown gas. The new star in Andromeda also may possibly have derived its increased light from immense falls of meteoric matter; it may be a variable of long period, or its brightness may never occur again.

Further, in some cases the periodical waning of stars may be owing to dark bodies, such as huge planets, coming between and partially intercepting the light; or the variable may be in reality a double star, each member of it revolving round some common centre. Then, when they are in a straight line with the earth, we shall only see the light of the nearest; but when they form with the earth a triangle, we shall get the light of both, though their angular distance may be too small to be appreciable, owing to their remoteness from the earth.

Another cause of variability has been suggested by Professor Stewart. He says in his researches on our sun, which is without doubt a variable star, that 'we are entitled to conclude that in our own system the approach of a planet to the sun is favourable to increased brightness, especially in that part of the sun nearest the planet.' The increase of brightness, however, seems to be small, and would hardly be noticeable in a star so remote as that in the Andromeda nebula.

Again, in many cases the cause of variation is beyond a doubt internal; tremendous volcanoes (if we may compare small things with great) burst out from the interior of the star itself. In the spectrum of the new star in the Northern Crown in 1866 there were found one bright line in the red, and three bright lines in

the blue, which included the lines of hydrogen. This star still exists, though only faint, and Dr. Huggins thought that its sudden flare up in 1866 was due to immense volumes of incandescent hydrogen bursting out from the interior—rather suggestive of our own solar protuberances and red flames. As to the cause of these eruptions, we can no more explain them than we can explain terrestrial earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Now, it happens that Lord Rosse and others think they can detect bright lines in the spectrum of the new star of Andromeda, and, if this be so, it evidences the existence of huge masses of incandescent gases.

An old idea was that certain parts of the sun and other stars were brighter than others, and thus as they revolved we should see their brightness increase and decrease. To some extent this is of course true, as the sun-spots show, and it may account for some cases of variability.

Such, then, are some of the theories as to the causes of variable stars. Probably there is truth in all, and in some cases we may have one or more of these causes acting at once, as we venture to suggest is the case in Andromeda. Even supposing that the nebula is not an outside galaxy, but is within our own galaxy, and so not so remote as has been hitherto thought, yet it must be immensely removed from us, so far that its light may have taken hundreds or thousands of years to reach us. At that distance, then, nothing but the most mighty causes will account for the changes that have made the new star visible. The nebular theory we have seen cannot apply here; no near approach of planets could increase the brightness so much; neither can we suppose that different portions of the star vary so much in brightness; and as yet no positive evidence of the existence of incandescent gases is found, though Lord Rosse and others suspect it. Two methods, then, remain to account for the sudden brightness, and we venture to think they offer an all-sufficient reason, though of course they are mere conjectures, and not definitely proved facts. In the first place, the spectrum of the nebula shows that it consists of luminous solid or liquid bodies, surrounded by some gases which absorb the red rays; a collection of innumerable meteoric bodies in the middle stage of their existence, still retaining their heat and light: suns, in fact, but possibly so small as hardly to deserve the name, and certainly too small to be separately distinguished by our telescopes—as Mr. Proctor calls it, a

vast collection of cosmical dust kept at intense heat *by some unknown means*, but surrounded by other cloud-like matter which intercepts the red rays. Now, for some months past considerable movement has been suspected in the nebula, a mighty rush, as it were, of these bodies to a focus situated 20'' from the place where the new star has appeared. Now, suppose the star has existed an indefinite time in the heart of the nebula, but invisible to us because hidden by innumerable small bodies which go to form the nebula. Then, as soon as the rush of these bodies to the focus had proceeded a while, the number of them intercepting the light of the star from us would be considerably lessened. Also, if, as we imagine must be the case, the new star is itself of considerable size, while not being sensibly attracted towards the focus itself, many of the smaller bodies would fall on it as meteors, and its own light and heat would be thereby much increased. Thus, while the star itself would actually gain in light and heat, the number of meteoric bodies between it and the earth would be lessened, and the effect would thus be doubled, the result being that the star, before invisible to us, would become visible. But, further, we can imagine that sufficient meteoric matter might fall on the star as to even partially gasify it, or, at any rate, so to disturb its outer parts as to liberate gases confined in its interior, and thus after a while we should see bright lines in its spectrum, as is already suspected. Indeed, it may be that the action will become so great as to completely gasify the whole star, as was the case with the new star in the Swan in 1876.

Such, then, are some of the methods which astronomers give of the birth of worlds and changes of variable stars. Of course, in most cases they are content to find out secondary causes—primary causes are beyond our ken. That there are other forces which we know nothing of is certain, and time may put our theories out of joint. It may be that we have seen the birth of a new sun; we may be looking on a world in flames; but certainly the most probable explanation is the one we have adopted—that we have witnessed merely the accidental or perhaps periodic blazing forth with renewed vigour of a star long existent, but hitherto too faint to be visible.

*RUSTICUS IN URBE.*

I HAD just returned from a hasty journey of some 12,000 miles when I called on an old peasant who had been sick when I left England. He was much the same, sitting in the same chair, leaning on the same stick, saying the same words.

But he added some more. He asked whether I had not been far away. I said 'Yes,' but hopelessly failed (indeed I did not seriously try) to convey any idea of what the 'far' implied in this case. I did not describe my journey to him. But I tried whether *he* had been journeying at any time. 'Well, yes.' Then I pursued my inquiry into details, and found that he had been to Bury—the next parish. Also 'was at Stowmarket' (about fourteen miles off) 'once or twice.' He went 'in a waggon—you know.' I then asked about London. Had he ever been to London? 'NO.' This was emphatic and final. No; he hadn't 'been no further than Stowmarket.' But he was pleased at the memory of that visit. He chewed its cud. It was a sort of ride to Khiva which he had taken. In a waggon. Fourteen miles.

Thereupon I set myself to inquire about the wanderings of others in my flock, and found that several men of middle age, intelligent superior workmen, had never seen the great city. Thus, presently, I asked about a score to go with me to London. I was touched with the readiness of the affirmative response. A few had been there, one or two more than once, but several never; though we are (in a straight line) only sixty miles off the Monument, and there are some half-dozen daily trains to town.

Those who were pleased to accept my invitation were the men of our choir, our ringers, and the committee of the village club and reading-room.

Having to run up to town that week, I made some inquiries and arrangements about the matter, and on my return some of us had tea at the Vicarage, when we talked late over the preliminary letters which had to be written to presumably hospitable relations in town. I then explained that I desired to visit no sights, but to show as much of London itself as could be seen in a long drive from the top of a private omnibus of which I had secured the hire. It was fresh varnished, and had red wheels. With

this I secretly flattered myself we should fill a place in the Ring during part of our round. My friends would see something worth looking at there, at least in the shape of horseflesh, of which they knew not a little. But the unexpected difficulty was how to find fit lodgings for such of our party as had no friends to go to, and were visiting London for the first time in their lives. Innumerable houses seemed hardly to provide a reasonable room. The so-called 'coffee-house' is frequently an abomination. I was shown what was considered a model lodging establishment by a kind friend; but—No. There seemed to be nothing in the way of a bed between threepence (respectability guaranteed, but forty in a room) and half-a-crown, with extras. However, at length this matter got itself settled, and the last touches were given to the preparations for our trip. The conspicuousness of it we felt to be promising, since the clerk, choir, and ringers were all to be absent from their posts at Barton on a Sunday. This was well. Nothing is more wholesome than an occasional holiday wherein others are put to inconvenience. It is most mortifying not to be missed, and the man who makes such careful provision for the discharge of his duties during his absence as to have them perfectly attended to deserves to find his place filled up for good when he returns. It is possible to be too considerate. 'Who will chime?' said the authorities, adding, 'We never yet let a Sunday be without ringing the bells.' 'Let it be now, then,' I prayed. Routine may be divine, but it is a good thing to break its neck every now and then, even in a small way. No doubt, to magnificent people, the course of this world in a country village is very small. Yet the life of many rural nooks helps to make that of the country; and if there are no drops, where is the ocean?

Well, we accomplished our round, and were most hospitably treated, having a sumptuous tea-supper provided for us one day at Toynbee Hall (where Oxford now touches Whitechapel—presently, I hope, to be joined by Cambridge in the contact), and on the next a dinner at the Charterhouse in the (high table) dining-room of that hospitable place.

Now I feel that I have come to a thin place in the ice of my simple narrative, since what I write is pretty sure to be read by some of my guests, and I should be sorry to offend. If there should be such a reader I hope he will forgive me for saying (inasmuch as I wish the thing to be said) that though divers of my



guests came fresh from the plough, being what some people call only 'common labourers,' and had never set foot in London before, the way in which they dropped into Japanese lounges in the large decorated drawing-room at Toynbee Hall, and fell into easy conversation with those members of the University who were resident there, was a protest against a too common mode of entertaining 'poor' persons. Most people, as a rule, take the tone of their surroundings. Association is the best teacher. If you choose to ask a hungry man (fresh from filling a 'muck-cart') to dinner, and, seating him in an outhouse (with sufficient elbow-room), put a pound or so of hot mutton with a dozen potatoes before him, he will probably give you a new view of what can be done in ten minutes. No great harm either, you will say. But society exists for (among other things) the interchange of courtesies which are hardly recognised in 'doing ample justice' to a coarse abundant meal. Those who have anywise fine perceptions of life are surely called to show their value of them in at least such hazardous performances as eating and drinking, which test 'manners.' There is nothing which more justly offends (or should offend) a 'working-man' than the mere filling or stoking of him, as if he were an engine. The fulness may probably be accepted without overt complaint, but man does not live by mutton alone, nor is he rightly led to suppose that the accessories of a feast are to be summed up in gravy, however rich.

Now Toynbee Hall exists partly in order to bring together (under fair sumptuary conditions) such supposed extremes of society as are represented by Balliol and Bethnal Green. And when we were guests there it realised another feature of its purpose, not merely in throwing its doors open to a party of thorough peasants who mostly came straight from the clods of the field, but in the easy courteousness with which the feast was made. We rustics all fell into the ranks of academical refinement at once. This was owing not merely to the frank greetings of our hosts, but to the reception of us without any fuss or display of social tact. I do not know which is most tiresome, entertaining or being entertained. A man who strains himself to be polite and agreeable is obviously repulsive. And this rule holds throughout all the manifold strata of entertainments. I do not mean that no addition should be made to the usual fare, and no special decoration be allowed, under any circumstances, but a visible departure from the routine of the household brings in some flavour

of constraint, and hinders the sense of ease with which the guests should be received.

But to return to our outing. I think the Albert Memorial made the most vivid impression, and the first steps within St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey the deepest. On the former one of our party remarked quietly, 'I never thought there could have been anything like it in the world.' The latter were entered in befitting silence. Not a word was said. Indeed, we betrayed no vulgar astonishment anywhere, though every pore was obviously open to new influences. I was delighted to feel that we were untainted by the sheer gaping sight-seeing spirit, though such questions and comments as found utterance were to the point. But they were very few. The least experienced, indeed, of our party eschewed surprise with the steadiness of Orientals. We saw more of London than many who have lived in it for years, since we went through the London Docks, measured a big ship, visited a large Board School, and drove from Ratcliff Highway to Kensington Gardens and back, by different routes, stopping on our way at several notable spots.

The crowd in the street is, however, the 'sight' of London to one who has never visited a large city; and it was so, plainly, to such of our party as had never seen the metropolis. And this sight is realised best, or even, I might say, only, by a continuous drive from one end of the town to the other. To move straight on through miles of streets, and know that you are not 'fetching a compass' or harking back upon your track, gives the best idea of size. And the unbroken procession on either side of the way suggests an innumerable multitude far more than a large assemblage does. There is an edge to the biggest mob, but there is no beginning nor end to the crowd which marches along the streets. It represents an incalculable population; and the wonder to the countryman is that they are all strangers. At home, with us, if we meet a man in the road whom we don't know, we mostly ask 'Who is that?' and if no one can tell us we stop and look at him as a phenomenon and wonder who he can be. But what an utter upsetting of this mood, what a hopeless baffling of curiosity, comes when we traverse five miles of streets in a straight line and meet nameless thousands on the right hand and on the left!

It is a good thing for countrymen to visit cities; not to attend meetings or see 'sights,' but to realise, if possible, the existence of myriads of whom he knows nothing, except that he

sees them troop along the streets in endless line. There is, no doubt, much to be said for rustic seclusion, for local pride, for parochial individuality. It is well for a peasant to think highly of his surroundings. The village authority must not be rudely challenged by pert quotations of town utterance, nor drowned in the sea of city life. The town may learn very much from the country, and yet certainly there is something for the rustic to learn from the town. His estimate of, if not respect for, local magnates is likely to be exaggerated beyond all reason, and that dogged stubbornness which invests parochial custom with the sacredness of ancient law is sometimes intolerably stiff and blind. Then it is not amiss for the countryman to encounter endless unsympathetic crowds, and to feel that the world roars on without caring twopence about Deep Slough-cum-Little Puddle. Village crust is sometimes very thick, and an admixture of fresh sentiment makes it not merely lighter but much more wholesome.

The extent to which regard for parochial boundaries, customs, and traditions is sometimes carried can be realised only by residence in a village. People intermarry within its limits till a couple of adjoining parishes may be found, each with its own distinct set of names. The spire of one may be visible from the churchyard of the other, but there may be hardly any interchange or social intercourse between the two. The old village sentiment of England survives with intensity, though its political value has (worse luck) been deeply impaired, if not extinguished. It is originally natural and admirable, but now is shown chiefly by intermarriage, till three-fourths of the inhabitants are blood relations to one another. It is difficult to forecast any influence likely to correct the mischief which must accompany such a state of things, for, though not so ancient as some fancy, their growth is too deeply rooted to be easily moved. It has descended from a comparatively recent and limited period in which travelling was very rare. In older days the intercommunication caused to a great extent by pilgrimages was great, not merely over and beyond Europe (the Wife of Bath visited Jerusalem thrice), but within this island. The number of cross-country roads which traverse a county bear witness to more popular movement than is made now. They are often almost disused, but were created by traffic. When pilgrimages ceased after the Reformation, much extended social intercourse came to a stop. Villages settled on their lees. Poor-laws bound them still closer together. The

result is to be perceived in that parochial exclusiveness which now often exists, and which has its unhealthy as well as wholesome side. No doubt this may be seen along with some of that ingrained English disposition to rove which brought our ancestors here, and creates emigrants. There are spots intensely local, which nevertheless have sent many settlers beyond the ocean. But these depart and remain away. They go for good. They settle abroad. They add nothing by their experience to the store or variety of conversation in their old homes. The occasional visit of a villager to some city, notably London, is on the other hand likely to start a hare of fresh talk which, to some extent, corrects the intense exclusiveness of parochial conversation. It wholesomely interrupts that necessarily limited though continuous interchange of opinion about the same neighbours and the same fields which exercises rustic society.

It may of course be urged, and not without some sense, that this is the safest discourse for Hodge. Better that he should boast of the apples in his garden as the best in the world than believe the streets of London to be sprinkled with gold. But it is really ignorance of these last which helps to encourage a mischievous delusive appetite for town life. The rustic who knows least about the city is perhaps likely to have the highest estimate of its resources. The more he is enabled to learn the truth about them the better. Now though an occasional visit may not do much, it does something to suggest that there are plenty of people already in town, and that some of them look anything but thriving. What we really want is a freer interchange or mixture of town and country. London is a heap of sand without any social coherence. A village community is sometimes tightly pressed or bound together like a clod. Bits get broken off occasionally and go to swell the sand heap; but the two conditions of life are as widely diverse as ever. It is indeed the marked social contrast which draws the fragment from the village even more than the prospect of better pay. At home, in the rural nook, all life is lived under minute inspection of neighbours, and perhaps the unavoidable supervision of parson and squire. No fiercer light than that beats upon the throne is clearer than that which exhibits young Hodge sowing his wild oats. He sins under a microscope. Or possibly a peasant offends a capricious employer, and has to leave his house and garden with a keen sense of being treated unfairly. Of course the farmer desires to have the cottages on

his land tenanted by his own workmen, and if a man leaves his employment he must needs generally leave his house. Master and man both understand that. But occasionally a rustic eviction turns the eyes of the dispossessed to a city where no questions are asked by the landlord as long as the rent is paid, and where change of employment does not by any means necessarily involve change of dwelling. It is thus that some bits are broken off the village mass and added to the loose London heap. The village remains as tightly compressed as ever. Meanwhile, corrective social bonds (which do us all good) grow looser and looser in towns as their population increases. How shall the tightness of the one and the dislocation of the other be corrected? Can they be anywise fused? Attempts, at least proposals, have, we know, been made to create 'industrial villages' where security of tenure shall be provided, and crafts pursued under healthy conditions. These projects are no mere dreams, but capable of being realised and subjected to proof. Even if they should be tried and found wanting (possibly at first through some unforeseen social difficulties which lie hid in the long-drawn history and habits of our people), still the mere fact of their having been suggested and seriously tried would be a notable protest against that spirit of separation which now divides the town from the country. No one who knows anything of human nature will suppose that a mixture of town and country mice would do much to cure or contaminate either, for immorality may be found in the shady lane as well as in the glaring street, but much that is wanting to the bodily health of the townsman and the social perceptions or experience of the rustic might be supplied by their meeting half-way in some industrial community.

As it is, the town is often looked upon by the country, and the country by the town, as a place merely to see or spend a holiday in. Their respective inhabitants judge the others as filling widely divided conditions of life. When rude, they call one another 'chawbacons' or 'cockneys,' with opprobrious insinuations of ignorance about the commonest matters. But a chief want in all society is that people may know one another a little better; and even a flying visit does something towards a perception that, though man is much the same all the world over, there is always a lesson to be learnt from seeing people in other conditions of life. This is sure to be useful either in adding to our store of information, or in lessening our conceit at particular belongings. I have hinted that many Londoners are very ill

informed. The stock of commonplace knowledge possessed by town children, indeed, appears unexpectedly limited to teachers who are familiar with the country. The urchins may be bright and sharp, but their ignorance is pathetic. The country, 'nature,' provides the chief bulk of ordinary information used as facts, illustrations, or examples; and we can hardly realise the truth that with many the knowledge of these facts is drawn, not from actual observation and experience, but from books and pictures. This defect in the education of town children has indeed been largely corrected of late years by the good and growing practice of sending poor children into the fields for a few weeks rather than hours. The 'day in the country' which a list of published appeals pleads for every summer is obviously in many if not most instances too hot, crowded, and noisy an affair (however delightful) to give anything like a true feeling of country sentiment. But a fortnight in a 'truly rural' cottage sends the little cockney back with the surprising perception that rustic knowledge confers social distinction, and that small 'chawbacons' have been dieted with unexpected success. It is, however, perhaps of most importance that the countryman should be able to realise better than he now does what the town fails in giving, however superior its money wages may be. An occasional dip into the moving city crowd is wholesome for him as a corrective of exclusiveness, but the gilt is taken off his city earnings when, *e.g.*, he has to pay sixpence for a bundle of carrots (say a dozen), and reflects that a bushel holding about seven times as many (I am speaking of ascertained facts) is sold for the same money in his own old village. The city dweller is no doubt seriously fleeced by greedy 'rings' in the matter of vegetables as well as fish, but, whatever the cause, the cost of London living ought to be better apprehended by the ambitious countryman. It is not impossible, however, that the possession of the franchise by the agricultural labourer may lead him to expect, and find, a better stake in the 'provinces' than he now has, and that he may take such fresh stock of his position and possibilities there that the land will be less drained of its life into city streets. Hitherto the political ignoring of the peasant has no doubt led some to flit for the sheer pleasure of recording a vote; and when they can go to their own ballot-boxes, another weight will be dropped into the country side of the scale, and the importance of the townsman grow less. But, all the same, it will ever be well for the rustic to have a social bath now and then in the Strand.





## DOLLY'S DREAM.

Chester Street, S.W., Monday, Nov. 7, 1881.

MY DEAREST DOLLY,—I was so glad to get your letter, and to hear how much you are enjoying yourself. The Chestertons are always such kind people, and their house is a thoroughly nice one to stay at. I trust your gowns are *holding out*? I was almost sorry to hear of the ball you are to have in the house; I am afraid your best white frock will look by this time crushed, and altogether the worse for wear. Yes, dear child, it is certainly getting high time for you to think of coming home—and on more accounts than one. I have got on pretty well without you on the whole, though of course I have often missed my dear Dolly. But it is not from any selfish feeling that I wish you to leave Cudworth, and return to me as soon as possible. To be plain with you, my child, I am uneasy about you—not from what you say, but from what you *don't* say. I know Mr. John Fortescue has been staying for some time at Cudworth, and I do not like your silence about him. If all were as it *should be*, you would surely mention him in your letters to me, as you do most of the other guests. But, beyond telling me that he was there, and had had five shots in his leggings one day out rabbiting, you never speak of him, and I confess I feel anxious.

Surely, my darling, you are not so silly as to revive that old, foolish flirtation? You remember our little conversation about him a year ago, and how brave and good you were, and agreed entirely with me, that, under the circumstances, it was out of the question that you should think of marrying him? Of course he is very *nice* and all that; still one must remember that a man, in these days, with a small Irish estate is no better than a pauper!

Lady Geraldine told me the other day that a friend of hers in Mayo was positively brought so low that she can only write to her friends on post-cards, she cannot now afford notepaper and stamps! She has not had a new gown for more than a year, and her friends are going to subscribe to get her a mangle, or a knitting machine, or some incubators—I forget which—to enable



her to support herself. And she used to be considered (for Ireland) quite an heiress—had a property of six or seven hundred a year. Think, dearest Dolly, of all this, and be very careful and prudent. How much I now wish I were with you! But the next best thing will be to have you safe at home again.

With much love, I am, ever your fond mother,

DOROTHEA C. TREMAINE.

It was perhaps a shocking and unfilial thought, but Dolly, as she re-read this letter, felt strongly inclined to wish that her mother had, like the unfortunate lady of Mayo, been obliged to confine herself to the small and humble post-card. A very decided frown darkened Miss Tremaine's face, her cheek flushed, and her blue eyes had an angry sparkle in them.

It was very hard for her, she felt, to be thus lectured and cautioned; she did think mamma might have trusted her. And then, being a true woman, there leaped up in her a mighty desire to avenge herself on the person who had thus innocently brought down upon her all these disagreeable cautions and warnings. To-night mamma should see, if she were here, that she need have no cause for anxiety, she said to herself bitterly.

Then she got up quickly from the low chair where she had been sitting by her bedroom fire, and rang for her maid.

Dolly Tremaine was certainly a very pretty girl. She was tall and slender, with the long, shapely limbs and short waist that one sees so rarely in the ordinary Englishwoman. The Keltic blood in her showed in the union of pale blue eyes with intensely black hair and lashes. Her complexion was dark, with a glow on her cheeks *through* the skin, as if a deep-red carnation were buried there.

Dinner was early that evening at Cudworth Hall, on account of the ball which was to follow—a fact which Lady Chesterton had duly announced, and duly apologised for, to her guests.

'I put ten o'clock on the cards,' she said, with the plaintive manner that was habitual to her, only a little more pronounced, 'but our good neighbours here are so very punctual that one has to be ready almost to the moment. I remember at the first ball we gave here after we were married, I had not even begun to dress when the first carriage drove up, and, though I made all the haste I could, there were nearly forty people in the room by the time I got down, and no one to receive them. They were very much

offended, and nearly all the young ladies caught violent colds, and no wonder, sitting shivering in an ice-cold ball-room for three-quarters of an hour. Old Mr. Payne-Smith, the great brewer here, was so angry; he always declared the chill of the room brought out his gout, and when Lord Chesterton stood at the next election he went over to the Radicals, and we lost ever so many votes by him.'

It was a great aggravation to Miss Tremaine in her present mood to find that it was with Mr. Fortescue that Fate, in the shape of Lady Chesterton, had linked her for dinner.

'How lucky this is!' said he, as they stood together, waiting for the more honourable guests to pass out of the doorway first. 'I want so much to talk to you about something—something that I have only heard of this afternoon, a piece of bad luck that has happened to me.'

'Is it very interesting?' said Dolly, in a languid voice, as they seated themselves at the dinner table. 'Pray, if it is not, kindly keep it to yourself, for I don't feel the least in a mood this evening to weep with those who weep. If you are going to turn into a modern Job, I am in far too good spirits to act the part of a comforter. I should laugh, I know, quite in the wrong place, and be even more disagreeable than the originals were.'

'I don't know,' said Jack, a little sadly, 'if it will interest you at all. Perhaps it is foolish of me to bore you with such a small matter as my coming or going. However, I have just had a telegram from my agent Macarthy at Moyarget saying that he cannot stay there for another day. He has been boycotted for two months, and has stood *that*, and got no end of threatening letters, and had absurd little two-inch-deep graves dug in front of his door during the night, and has stood that too. But now that it has come to shots being fired into his bedroom about twelve o'clock at night, one of which has slightly wounded his wife, he is evidently quite unnerved, and no wonder, and implores me to let him leave the place at once. So my course is plain. I shall have to go over to Ireland to-morrow, and see if anything can be done towards discovering the ruffians who committed this outrage, and be my own agent for some time to come. So you see, Miss Tremaine,' continued Jack, with a sadness very foreign to his usual cheery, pleasant tones, 'I feel rather down and stupid to-night, what with thinking of poor Macarthy, and of having to go away so suddenly from Cudworth and—and you.'

A mist came for an instant before Dolly's eyes, and a pang passed through her. Then she hardened her heart, and determined not to relent.

'What a horrible story!' she said, shuddering slightly; 'surely it is rather dangerous for you to go amongst such bloodthirsty people; they must be ready for any crime. Won't you think better of it and not go? Do. I am sure,' graciously, 'they would all miss you here.'

'No,' Jack said, 'I must go. I should be a mean-spirited cur if I did not. Besides, I think when I am there things may be better. I have done a good deal one way and another for most of the people. They were always fond of me as a boy, on my mother's account I suppose, and they quite idolize her memory still. She liked the place and the people, and got on well with the priest even. To this day they call the last patch of snow on one of the hill-tops "Lady Mary's Apron." And then there has never been a single rent raised since Griffith's valuation. They cannot, I think, forget all the easy, pleasant past. They have perhaps been stirred up now by some wandering Land League ruffians, and perhaps Macarthy has somehow irritated them. When I go among them, and hear all they have to say, it will be different.'

Alas! poor Jack, little did he know how soon and how completely these modest hopes were to be dashed. He was like a man thinking he could moor a boat by a silken thread in the midst of a raging stream. The memories of past kindnesses, past benefits, past love and respect between landlord and tenant were all gone—swept away by the whirlwind of faction, and nothing but a passionate greed and hatred were left in their place.

Jack found the dinner that night rather a dull one. He felt, as he himself expressed it, 'awfully down,' and then Dolly was not as she had been during the past delicious week, when he had ridden with Dolly, walked with Dolly, acted Dumb Crambo with Dolly, and never before to-night had she put on this cold, snubbing manner.

Miss Tremaine seemed to find a great deal to say to her other neighbour, a Mr. Mainwaring, who talked in a gentle, dribbling way which made Jack lay back his ears and long to kick him. He said something between his teeth to himself, and then felt rather better, especially when Miss Tremaine, who was in truth

getting considerably bored, suddenly turned to him and applied herself to the easy and dangerous task of soothing him down, and making him fatuously happy once more. 'Poor Jack!' she thought to herself, 'I mean to be most careful and prudent all night, so I may venture to be a little bit kind to him just for the present. He does look so handsome and so manly—such a difference to this wretched creature who has been wearying me to death. I feel I have fatally injured the action of my heart by restraining so many yawns. If I were to die to-night my blood would be upon his head. Yet all he would do would be to write a "Ballade" upon me, and speak of me as a "dead ladye," comparing me to "Alys" or "Bertha Broadfoot," or some other unknown, disreputable creature, who lived—or didn't live—hundreds of years ago.'

'I shall wait for you at the bottom of the stairs so as to arrange our dances comfortably.'

Jack whispered these words in Dolly's ear, under cover of the general rustle and buzz that always accompany the setting sail of the fair 'Outward Bound' from a dining-room.

A little smile crossed Dolly's face. Then, in company with her fellows, she went upstairs to begin for the ball.

She sat so long musing by the fire that her maid at last knocked, pretending that she thought she had been rung for. 'Mrs. Smith says, miss, that her ladyship is very anxious that all the house party should be in the ball-room as near ten o'clock as possible. It is almost half-past nine now. I have done the best I could for your dress, and I don't think it will look at all bad.'

'Very well, Turner,' said Miss Tremaine, slowly rising. 'I suppose I may as well begin.'

But for some reason she seemed indisposed to hurry herself. Ten o'clock struck, and a few moments after the first carriage drove up. Dolly wondered to herself if it contained the gouty and irascible Mr. Payne-Smith, prepared to brave another chill and to return, if all were well, to the Conservative fold! More soon followed. Evidently the worthy Sussex people considered that punctuality is the truest politeness, and that ten o'clock on invitation cards means ten o'clock, or as near that hour as long distances and heavy roads, plentifully laid down with unyielding flints, will allow.

Dolly heard the music of the first dance, an extra, begin; then

a pause, then another—this time 'La Berceuse,' her favourite waltz. It seemed to come sighing up to her, and a thrill ran through her as its soft melody sang itself on to the end and then died away. It was Jack's favourite waltz, too. How often they had swung round to its dreamy measure, a pair of waltzers it was a pleasure to look at, perfect in grace and unison, the result possibly of long and arduous practice—together!

Still Dolly loitered and lingered till Turner grew impatient. She wished her young lady would go down and leave her at liberty to watch the new arrivals, and to take stock, with the searching gaze a lady's-maid only can attain to, of all the dresses, with their various makes, shapes, and fits, the trimmings and flounces and purtenances thereof.

At last Dolly pronounced herself ready, and set out on her long journey to the distant ball-room. She went cautiously down the wide, polished oak stairs, holding on anxiously to the banisters. There was a great painted window half-way down where the stairs turned. She stopped for a moment to see if there were light enough for her to make out the text inscribed there in old English letters, which every day as she passed up and down struck her anew with a sense of its admirable fitness as a warning to any rash traveller down those slippery stairs:—

Let him that thinketh hee standeth take heed lest he fall.

Then she lingered to look at the moonlight lying in a great pool outside in the courtyard. The age, by the way, of

The orbéd maiden, with white fire laden,  
Whom mortals call the moon,

was always carefully ascertained by the considerate Lady Chester-ton ere fixing the date for her ball. She *engaged*, as it were, that luminary to be in attendance, as she did Gates's band from Brighton, and additional men to wait at supper.

Dolly truly made a pretty picture as she came click, clicking downstairs in her little high-heeled shoes. Her gown was white and satiny-looking, with the upper part of some sparkling stuff which made her look as if she were wet and gleaming with water-drops. Mr. Mainwaring told her in a murmuring voice, later on in the evening, that she reminded him of

Idalian Aphrodite, beautiful,  
Fresh as the foam, new bathed in Paphian wells.

After all, she found her delaying had been of no avail. There,

at the bottom of the stairs, stood Mr. Fortescue, looking impatiently upwards, evidently waiting for her. Dolly's heart gave a throb of gratified vanity. It charmed her to feel that she had the power to cause him thus to stand, cooling his heels and waiting till it was her pleasure to appear. But only for an instant did she allow herself to feel pleased. Then she hardened her heart anew, and determined to act on her recent resolutions of being very good and prudent, and all that mamma could desire her to be. Jack came up to her, too, with an air of almost appropriation that irritated her.

'How late you are!' he said impatiently. 'I began to think you were never coming. I have been waiting here for ages. But let's get to work now. How many? They're just finishing No. 3.'

'How many?' echoed Dolly coldly. 'I'm afraid I can only give you—let me think—yes, No. 13, or one somewhere about there. Perhaps'—innocently—'you would, however, prefer one lower down. Should we say 21?'

Jack looked up, feeling the foundations of the earth were getting unsteady below him. This from Dolly—Dolly, the list of whose waltzes at a ball might generally be described as consisting of 'The first with Mr. Fortescue, and so on to the end!'

He stood silent for a moment, then gave a formal bow of acquiescence, as he might have done to a stranger to whom he had just been introduced, and without another word offered his arm to Miss Tremaine.

'May I take you,' he said gravely, 'to the drawing-room? Lady Chesterton is there.'

Dolly had determined thoroughly to play her part of being cold and distant, but she had not reckoned on this ready assistance in it from her fellow-actor. It disconcerted her dreadfully. However altered and disagreeable *she* might be, Jack was never to change. He was always to be ready to hold his cheek to the smiter, and she was to smite as hard and as often as she pleased.

He placed her under Lady Chesterton's wing in the drawing-room, and then left her at once.

'What a delightful ball! Everything so well-arranged and the dancing kept up with such spirit!'

So every one said, and so Dolly fibbingly assented. But in her heart of hearts she thought it the dullest ball she had ever been at. Yet it ought to have been a night of triumph for her. She was the prettiest girl present, and she very soon knew it. The



men went for her with one accord, and scrambled and jostled for a dance. Dolly began to look forward to No. 13 with a sort of longing which was altogether unjustifiable and ridiculous, as she told herself sternly. The dance before was to be devoted—or sacrificed—to Mr. Mainwaring. That one over, then for a little pleasure, she thought. She wished very fervently it were over, for her heart misgave her as her partner limply passed an arm round her and prepared hurriedly, but feebly, to dash into the thickest of the fray, where the good Sussex people were hopping and turning and rushing, no thought of rhythmic dancing, or steering even, troubling their worthy brains. Couple dashed against couple. There were as many falls as generally take place during a moderately fast run. Blood was drawn freely from bare arms by the simple process of rasping bracelets firmly down them. A very few minutes of this species of warfare, with an utterly incapable partner, were enough for Dolly. Battered, bruised, her toes tramped on by friend and foe alike—for Mr. Mainwaring had not been guiltless in this particular—breathless, and feeling as if she had been *at least* knocked down and run over by a coach and four, she indignantly withdrew from the circle of happy dancers and cast herself on a seat, whence no persuasions of Mr. Mainwaring's could draw her. He, after the usual manner of bad dancers, longed to be up and at it again. He generally contrived to ward off the worst of the blows by using his partner as a buffer, so on the whole he did not himself suffer much.

At last the music stopped. People sauntered out and in. The band disposed themselves in easy attitudes on their chairs. The man who played the cornet gave a huge yawn. Another looked at the open window near and shivered. Surely, this was an unusually long interval! At length the conductor took down, in a leisurely sort of way, No. 12 and stuck up No. 13. Then he rapped his *bâton* sharply, and then at last, at last—oh, happiness!—the waltz began.

All Sussex as usual came crowding in at once, every one struck afresh by the same brilliant thought. 'If *we* go now, *we* shall find the room almost empty.'

The music flowed on, time was passing, but no Jack appeared to claim 'the poor maiden all forlorn.' Where could he be?

Had he cut her for it, and was she not to have the one dance she had been *living for*? she asked herself in a sudden access of passion. At last she saw Mr. Fortescue's tall form come in at one



of the doors some way off. She could see him look round and round the room. She was sitting on a form placed against the wall, and at that very instant a fat country gentleman, with his equally fat partner, stepped in front of her, completely hiding her from view. When they moved Jack had disappeared. The waltz was half over by this time. She felt as if each bar played robbed her of something precious.

'What a fool I have been!' she thought angrily to herself. 'I never, never will try to be good again.'

Once more Jack appeared, entering this time by a different door. Dolly was plainly visible now, the bovine-like blotters-out of her existence having moved. She saw him run his eye over blue girls, pink girls, red girls, yellow girls, wasting his time, manlike, through an imperfect recognition and remembrance of colour. At last it fell upon a certain white girl, and in an instant Dolly saw his face brighten, and he was beside her.

'I have been looking for you everywhere,' he said, 'and was just going to give the search up in despair, concluding you did not wish to dance this—with *me*. Are you inclined for a turn now?'

'Of course I am,' said Dolly gaily. 'I want something to wash the taste of the last one out of my mouth. Oh, I had a terrible experience, so terrible that I feel a little nervous about entering the fray again—even with *you*!'

The last three softly spoken words were the fruit of that good resolution of Miss Tremaine's, to abstain for the future from the paths of virtue, *in re* John Arnold Westenra Fortescue, Esquire. Was this the same floor? Were the dancers on it the same vigorous blow-dealing ones whom she had met and suffered from before? Was it the same band playing, or another just imported from Paradise? Obstacles seemed to melt away, collisions were warded off, deadly imminent knocks and blows passed harmlessly by.

'That was something like,' Dolly murmured, as the too short remainder of the waltz finished up in a great *fortissimo* crash, and they turned to leave the ball-room.

'You did not appear to be having an exactly happy time of it in the last,' said Mr. Fortescue grimly, but with the suspicion of an amused smile lurking in the corners of his mouth. 'You seemed to get away to a bad start, and never were on terms with the music the whole way through. See,' he continued, 'there are

two chairs I marked down as I was cruising about looking for you. Shall we sit down? I fancy we shan't be bothered by people here, and I want to speak to you for a moment.'

Dolly sat down obediently, with a delightful air of unconcern and gaiety. But her heart beat very fast, disagreeably so, and the lovely carnations on her cheeks deepened and then paled with each hurried throb.

Dr. Richardson has told us of various interesting ways of calculating the work done by that patient pump. In one hour it has toiled enough to have lifted itself to the height of 13,860 feet or so. Dolly felt as if hers were, at this moment, tearing up Mont Blanc, say, with barely half an hour to do the task in.

'I want to know,' began Jack, without the slightest attempt at any elegant preamble,—'I want to know how I have offended you; for I know I have somehow, but what I have done I can't think. I have been racking my brains all the evening to try and find out. So please tell me, straight, how I have contrived to vex you. I am so awfully sorry, but I can't apologise properly till I know what I have done. Of course you can't think that, whatever it is, I have done it wittingly. Ah, Dolly, you must know that I am just the same as I was last year about you, when your mother came between us, and you refused to hear me any more—that I would give you the heart out of my breast if it would do you any good, and that I will never stop loving you till the end of the chapter. So speak to me, Dolly; tell me what I have done, and for Heaven's sake give me the chance of repairing my fault, whatever it may be!'

Jack's pleading voice sank very low, and there was a little tremble in it. Dolly sat still, her eyes cast down, her hands nervously playing with a bit of her dress. But she said not a word.

'Dolly, won't you speak to me even? Are you really so angry with me? Dolly, Dolly, look at me: tell me it's all some foolish mistake.'

He rose to his feet as he spoke, and stood right in front of her, so close that she could feel him touching her as she sat in her low chair before him. Suddenly he stooped, and, putting a hand on each arm of her chair, he looked straight into her face. She could feel his breath move the little loose hairs on her forehead. Oh, that heart of hers! It was certainly doing its mountaineering work very rapidly now. Surely the summit of Mont Blanc was

almost attained. Her lips trembled, then a little smile came. She made a great effort, lifted her eyes, and 'lookit full on him.'

'I wish,' she began, but what she wished Jack never knew, for at that moment the sound of a near footstep smote on their ears. Jack drew himself up into a decorous position. Dolly started violently, and a voice said joyously—

'Oh, Miss Tremaine, here you are at last! This is our dance, and I have been looking for you here, there, and everywhere.'

One single hearty Saxon word rose in Jack's throat, and was crushed down there. Certainly it was very hard for him to be thus interrupted.

Matters were beginning to be right with him, he felt. The old Dolly was coming back under the influence of his pleading words. His greedy eyes, fastened on her face, had seen the hard, cold look go, and had watched the sweet lovelight spring up there instead.

Dolly rose at once. 'Oh, dear!' she said to herself, as she walked away to the ball-room with her partner, 'I felt desperately near yielding then. This will never do. I must be more careful. I feel I have been saved, though as by fire, as mamma would say.' She could hardly keep from laughing outright as she thought of the look on Jack's face as she left him, and how he had glared at the unfortunate youth, who had evidently conducted his search for her with great energy and skill, heavily handicapped, too, as he was by being extremely shortsighted. He was a thin, dark young man, with a fine turn for conversation, as Dolly soon found out.

'I was very lucky,' he said complacently; 'I went about looking for you everywhere, and just by accident, at the end of that long passage, I thought I saw something shine. So I put up my eyeglass to see what it could be, and there it was *you*. Isn't this a splendid ball?' continued he. 'Down here we always think it the best in the whole year. The Chestertons do things so well. One always knows the supper will be A 1 and the champagne safe. And then one is sure to meet everybody one knows. Altogether it is always an awfully jolly ball, and we look forward to it like—like—*mad*,' said Mr. Goring, at a loss to blend elegance of metaphor with force of expression.

'I suppose,' said Dolly, smiling, 'you look forward to it for six months, and back on it for the other six. It is a case of "remembered half the year and hoped the rest."'

'Yes,' said her partner, 'that's something like it. However, you mustn't think, Miss Tremaine,' he went on after a short pause, 'that this is our only good ball. Oh! no, we are very lucky on this side of the county. We have the Hunt ball, and the County ball, and the Lunatics' ball—the County Asylum you know I mean—and some people go to the Trillingshurst ball as well. But that is a long way off, and is not always a success, for unless it is known beforehand that Lady Chesterton will go and take a large party, and the Lee-Wellers from Lee Park do the same, people won't go. The entries don't fill, do you see? and it is very melancholy to look at about eighty people dancing in a big room which would comfortably hold two or three hundred. Yes, quite three hundred,' Mr. Goring went on decisively, 'for they hold all the Dog and Poultry Shows in it, and travelling pantomimes and things. I think it is rather a pity they do use it so much in that way, for I remember at one ball held there, two days after the Dog Show, I was awfully bitten—oh! no, not by any *dogs*! The ball there last year was really very unfortunate. Hardly any one took tickets, and the committee found they could only run to two-and-twopence-farthing a head for drinks, and even Whiteley, you know, couldn't do much at that price. Anyhow every one was very ill next day, except the stewards, who, I remembered afterwards, drank nothing but water the whole evening. That ought in itself to have aroused suspicion, for none of them had ever been known before to touch a drop of water neat. But, on the whole, I do think our Sussex balls *capital*! We all know each other, and there is no stiffness or slackness about us. Then they all come close together. One gets to know all the ladies' dresses almost, one meets them out so often running. The Miss Wigginses, those large fat girls sitting opposite us on the bench, had red ones, dabbed about with little green beetles, all last winter, so one could spot them at any distance. Some stranger at one of the balls asked who those red girls were, and said he thought they were meant to represent our native Sussex cattle. So they have always been called since "The Fatted Beasts," which is a very good joke I think,' said Mr. Goring, giving a roar of sudden laughter right into Dolly's ear. 'It makes us all laugh still whenever the Wigginses appear.'

Dolly smiled faintly. She was not listening much to her partner's ceaseless flow of talk. Her thoughts were straying to

that dark corner down the passage, and the words which had been so suddenly broken off there. She had promised to give Jack another dance. Dare she keep her word? Was she strong enough to do so? She determined, at any rate, to run the risk—if risk there were.

‘I shall carefully eschew secluded seats,’ she said to herself, ‘and only sit out with him in the broad, safe glare of lamps and Chinese lanterns. I shall be *most* careful, and he shall have no chance of making me forget what my horrible duty is in that state of life to which it has pleased mamma to call me—which is to marry well, and never, oh! never, to think twice of any man who is poor.’

‘Was that poetry you said about remembering for half a year?’ broke in Mr. Goring’s loud, cheerful voice. ‘I think it sounded like it, but I never know any poetry, and, to tell the truth, I don’t care much with it. I shall never forget how disappointed I was with Matthew Arnold. I met him at dinner one night at my uncle’s, and found him so jolly, and like other people. We got together and talked so comfortably of Stilton cheese, and he was as sensible as any one. Then I heard about his being a poet, and I thought—well! at any rate, *his* poetry may be worth reading, and I bought two little books in green binding and set to work. But, oh, there *was* a difference! He went raving and ranting on, as they all do. I couldn’t make head or tail of any of the poems, and I shut up the books in disgust. I could hardly believe a man, who had talked to me so sensibly about cheese, and the length of time the different kinds ought to be kept, could change so for the worse when he took to writing poetry. Then about Shakespeare, too, don’t you think him awfully over-rated? I never could endure reading his plays, they are so stupid and so improbable. However, really at the Lyceum it is wonderful how they manage to polish him up. I don’t care much for Irving, and the way he goes on, but Ellen Terry is lovely; and then the scenery is so jolly, one hardly recognises that it is only one of Shakespeare’s plays one is looking at, it is all so improved.’

Dance after dance was played, got through, finished, and at last Jack’s number, so to speak, went up. He came up to Dolly at once, with, however, a very decided look of shyness—almost sheepishness—on his handsome face. It is certainly hard for a man to look and feel quite at his ease and unembarrassed on again meeting

the lady to whom he was, a short hour ago, just beginning a passionate declaration of love, which had been ruthlessly broken up *in transitu*, and has never therefore got delivered. A glance too at Dolly's face told him that all the tenderness had gone out of it. Once more a citadel, ready to fall, had been saved by the cackle of a goose.

Truly the far off, prone-in-slumber, Mrs. Tremaine had much reason, had she but known it, to invoke blessings on Mr. Goring's unconscious head. The dance finished, the billow of humanity broke quickly, and fell back from the shore of the ball room, scattering in various directions.

'The conservatory for me,' thought Dolly, as she and her partner joined in the ebb of the tide. 'Lots of *lights* there, and lots of people. No danger of Jack being able to be foolish,—nor of me either. It is a place I feel my honoured mother would approve of under the circumstances.'

The conservatory at Cudworth was one of the old-fashioned, badly built kind, very high, very damp, with broad stone passages running generously in between the flower stands. Everything grew immensely tall, and produced very few flowers. Still it was a delightful place to go into, there was so much room in which to move about. No terrific crash of falling pots followed on a rash movement. Flowers were kept in their proper places—that is to say, quite subordinated to the comfort of the human occupants of the place. There were a great many people in the conservatory when they entered, and only two seats were to be had, quite at the other end, in a little damp recess, overshadowed by a large camellia tree, with a low shelf running along part of the wall, on which, 'ranged in a valiant row,' stood a company of cactuses, stretching down long, uncanny-looking arms as if in quest of prey.

Dolly talked away bravely, allowing no dangerous silences to set in. It was well she had so much to say on such a number of interesting topics, as her companion hardly spoke at all. He sat very quiet, taking advantage of the half shade in which they were, to have a long, good stare at Dolly sitting beside him, looking so bright, so unruffled, and so extremely unconscious. He seemed to take in her beauty to-night as he had never done before, with a keenness that was like a sharp pain.

'I wonder,' said Dolly, suddenly turning her head a little towards him, and giving him the chance of admiring, as he had

often done before, the delicious tangle into which the lashes of her upper and lower lids got themselves at the corners of her eyes—a tangle so great and of so long a standing that it was evident no divorce could ever take place between them now—‘I wonder when the Menzieses will come to town? Have you heard anything of their possible doings?’

‘No,’ said Jack, ‘I haven’t. They did talk though—do you remember?—of not coming this year till March. I am sure I should stay on at Monzievaird, if I were they, as long as possible. What a jolly old place it is! The very nicest, I should think, in Perthshire. What a fine time we had there!—do you recollect, last autumn? I never saw anything like the colours the hills put on from day to day, and the air *rushed* at you with a sort of nip on it that made you feel so jolly and fresh. And the capercaillies in that bit of wood were great fun. How they used to thunder out of the young pine trees, as if they meant to knock you over!’

‘Yes,’ said Dolly, ‘Monzievaird was a nice place. I did enjoy my stay there immensely. But then I always think there is nowhere in the world like Scotland in the autumn.’

‘What a Sunday that was,’ said Jack, eagerly, ‘when we set off to see the Rocking-stone in Glen Tarken, and you and I got separated from the others, and missed the right place to cross the burn coming back. And you would insist on trying to jump it, instead of letting me carry you across lower down—and then you slipped and half fell into a big pool, and thought you were going to be drowned, and were very frightened.’

The remembrance of Miss Tremaine’s undignified plight here won a very decided smile from Jack. But it changed into a sigh as he added in a lower tone, half to himself, ‘Yes, it was a *very* good day. I often think of it now, and wish to Heaven it would all come over again.’

‘Do you?’ said Dolly. ‘I am sure *I* don’t, and I can’t think why you should. I can’t see what particular pleasure it could have been for you to get yourself wet through, fishing me out, then have to “take hands” like children, and make me run till I was almost dead, for fear of catching cold.’

‘Can you really wonder at my pleasure in it, Dolly?’ said Jack, softly. ‘Don’t you think it was something for me to hold you for a moment, as I did, in my arms, and to hear your dear little voice crying out, as you felt yourself slipping back into that pool,



"Oh! Jack, save me!"—and to feel you clinging to me in your fright? Oh! Dolly, to have all that come back again I would willingly forfeit ten years of my life.'

The conservatory was empty now. A new dance had begun and they were alone. The situation, Dolly felt, was fraught with danger; she must put an end to it. 'Come,' she said abruptly, rising as she spoke, 'we must go. It is cold here, and I am engaged for this dance.'

From early childhood have we not all been taught that 'the more haste the worse speed?' So Miss Tremaine found in this instance, for as she got up hastily she forgot the overhanging shelf behind, and knocked her head rather sharply against it and its bristly freight. In revenge, apparently, one of the thorny cactus arms promptly buried itself in the coils of her hair. An impatient movement of her head only caused the intruder to dig himself a deeper grave there and to hold on more firmly. Jack came to the rescue, but he was certainly very slow and clumsy. Could those really be the same fingers which had so often deftly made and tied 'Jock Scots' to the destruction of many unwary members of the salmon tribe? They seemed very awkward now. Dolly endured the fumbling for an instant, then, hoping to make things easier for her would-be deliverer, and give him a better hold on his prickly adversary, she moved her head a little bit, turning the chin upwards. The two faces were very near now. A sudden light came into Jack's eyes, and then, abandoning the cactus, which, jerked off its shelf, fell with a loud crash into the abyss beneath, he bent forward—and then the world was changed to them both for ever, for between them was the troth-plight of a kiss.

'Jack!'

'Dolly!'

'Jack, if I become prematurely bald where you and that torturing cactus wrought your will, will you *promise* to buy me a "weightless wig" or "a natural crop toupee" at M. Lichtenfels to hide the gashly wound? And Jack, Jack, *don't* go to Ireland.'

The winter afternoon was closing in very dark and dreary in London about three weeks after the date of the memorable Cudworth ball. So Dolly seemed to find it, as she sat alone by her bedroom fire looking absently at the bright flame. Evidently her eyes were with her heart, and that was far away. An open

letter lay in her lap. Poor Dolly! her life had not been of the happiest lately. She had had to return alone to face her mother's wrath, and, what was even more trying, her mother's grief and tears. Jack was still in Ireland, and seemed each day to be more firmly tied there. His letters were getting more and more dispirited. Every one seemed to have turned against him. He had fallen under the ban. His Irish servants and labourers had, with one exception, deserted him in a body; one old English servant, too, with his wife and daughters, stuck to him. The blacksmith would not shoe his horses, the grocer refused to lighten his darkness with a pound of candles, the dealers would not buy his beasts, the baker drove past and left him loafless. Every one shunned him as if he had the plague. No wonder his heart was sore, and that his letters to Dolly, though in them he tried to make as light of his difficulties as possible, showed pretty clearly the indignation and annoyance that he so keenly felt. In the letter which was lying on Dolly's knee he said:—

'You ask me to tell you truly and seriously all about my life here, and what I do, now that I am boycotted in good earnest. I told you how all the labourers have been frightened from me; if they had had the pluck to stick to me, they were strong enough to have beaten the farmers in the district if they had but held together. Since last Monday I have been going in for a regular Swiss Family Robinson sort of life. I feed the sheep, and old Mrs. Pescud and her daughters milk the cows before breakfast. Then the cows have to be fed and turned out to grass. The sheeps' pen has to be moved—not made of nice light wattles such as you are familiar with, but of stout wooden bars. No wonder at first every muscle in my body ached with hauling these things about. Then hay has to be brought down for the beasts. Altogether I, with old Jonathan Pescud and the one labourer who has stuck to me, are hard at work till dark, usually under the watchful eyes of a couple of policemen, who are in the house for fear of an attack. I don't myself think there is the slightest chance of my being molested, but as the policemen are there they may as well show themselves, striking terror into evil-doers, and being very useful, too, in giving a hand quietly, though of course they are supposed to do nothing but guard us. More police are to come (I think in a day or two we shall have ten about the place and farm), and I believe some troops are expected soon in the village, three miles off. I am trying hard to get some men

to help with the farm, but have not succeeded as yet. The farm is, as you know, the serious question with me. How I wish I could get over to see you, if only for ten minutes, but I don't see the least chance of doing so for some time to come. If only Government would do something to restore peace and order one would get on well enough. Forster, however, is certainly very civil, and has sent a telegram once or twice to tell me I can have more protection if I want it. I generally go about with my revolver, but I don't the least apprehend any violence. The scoundrels, I fancy, do not mean to kill me, only to starve me out, and in that case I ought, I think, to beat them. If it weren't for you, my darling, and the longing I have to see you, which comes on me sometimes with such awful intensity, I should not be much to be pitied after all. There is a sort of grim satisfaction in fighting the fellows, especially as I am very hopeful of eventually beating them. But, oh, Dolly! it *is* hard to be so cut off from you—just now, too. Sometimes I declare I feel inclined to give up the fight, cut the whole concern, and fly over to you on the spot. But I know this would be stupid, and bad for us both in the future. For being married won't enable us to live on air and dispense with bread and cheese, and my little all is in this place. So there is nothing for it but to hold on and endure, and hope for brighter days.'

A shiver had passed through Miss Tremaine as she finished reading this letter. Throughout the day she had been haunted by a strange and dreadful feeling, as if some hidden terror hung over her, which, strive as she might, she could not shake off.

In the late afternoon she went sadly up to her own room, longing to be alone, to fling herself down and to think of Jack and nothing else, to read his letter over for the twentieth time, and to cry over it as much as she pleased.

It was no wonder that, tired and dispirited, after some time spent in this eye-reddening, headache-producing employment, the heavy lashes closed, the corners of the sad little mouth ceased to tremble, and she lay motionless in her chair, in her white dressing gown, having sobbed herself to sleep like a piteous little child.

And then Dolly dreamed this dream.

At first only broken ideas and images rambled confusedly through her brain. She was riding with Jack, she was dancing with him to the music of 'La Berceuse,' and it stopped all at once, and the room became quite dark. She seemed to see herself

as if it were some one else, and this feeling that she was looking on at herself, and was separate, for the time, from that self, never left her throughout the whole of the dream. Always, too, she was troubled with a sense that Jack was in peril and needed her help.

Then, quite suddenly, these confused scenes passed away, and she saw clearly before her the long avenue at Moyarget, of which Jack had often told her, bordered on each side by young trees, most of them planted in his mother's lifetime, Moyarget being very poorly timbered, as is so often the case with small Irish estates. She could see the big, white house at the end of the drive, with its square, unbroken outline. It was getting dark, and the shade of the trees in the avenue made it specially so there. Once an owl flew out, with a hideous screech, and then blundered off out of sight into the twilight gloom. There was a slight movement behind a large bush, such as a rabbit might make in scuttling out of his hole. But in another instant Dolly seemed to see two men crouching there close together, their heads turned the same way, looking intently down the drive.

She saw the blackened, hideous faces, and the wolfish, eager look each wore. She saw, above all, the gun which one of them held, and which seemed to strike her even then as of a queer old make and shape. She heard their very breathing—they seemed near enough for her to *touch*.

'It must be done this evenin''—she heard the low mutter of their speech. 'To-morrow there would be no chaynce at all, for the sogers is comin' and a lot more of thim d—d police; so he will be tuk care of at ivery turn. To-night's the time, or niver. Sure he won't fail to come this way after all the watchin' and waitin' for him that we're done.'

Oh, the supreme anguish of that moment! The breath hardly forced itself from between the sleeper's pale lips; her forehead was bathed in dew; the long lashes lay motionless on cheeks from which every vestige of colour had fled. Was, then, hate mightier than love—than her love, at any rate? Was she able to see and hear and feel everything, and yet *do* nothing to save the man she loved from death? Silence still in the long avenue, becoming momentarily darker. Then a sound—a cheerful human sound of some one whistling—broke the silence. She could distinguish the tune: it was 'La Berceuse.' Then a man's figure appeared in the distance—Jack's, of course.

He was coming rather slowly up the drive, his hands crossed negligently behind his back. There was something dejected and careworn about his whole appearance. He looked very different from the Jack who had left her such a short time ago.

Ah, Jack! little as you know it, you are nearer death now than you have ever been, or will be till the dawn of your day of doom breaks.

A few seconds speed by. Jack has taken some more steps nearer destruction.

'Give him toime, and be asy till you can cover him widout any fear of a miss. Remimber, 'tis but wan bar'l o' the owld gun that ull go aff. Iverything depinds on his bein' alone and you takin' a fair, straight aim at him. But, Larry, what ails ye?'

'Holy Mother of God! we're done. He's *not* alone! Don't ye see there's some wan walkin' beside him that he doesn't seem to know of—that kapes on this side betwixt us and him? 'Tis o' no use to try a shot; we have but the wan, *and he's guarded as he walks by the woman in white!*'

Then all sounds ceased in the dark avenue. The two black figures stole away, and the man they had doomed to die, unknowing of the danger that had been so near, passed quietly on. An intensity of darkness seemed to fall on Dolly's soul, and to wrap it round—then suddenly, with a shiver and a cry, she woke, and shrieking 'He is safe!' she rose to her feet. But only for a moment; a hand seemed to snatch her down into black unknown depths, and she fell forward, still with that cry upon her lips, fainting on the floor.

. . . . .

'Well, Dolly, here I am, come as quick as steam would bring me, after getting your mysterious telegram the night before last. Come, give me a proper welcome back to the heavenly atmosphere of London, which I feel now I have never before properly appreciated. Oh, the rapture the first smut on my nose gave me! I quite longed to catch and preserve it, for then I knew that at last, at last, I was really in London, out of that wretched, heart-breaking "sister-isle," and once more near you. But why do you look so pale and tremble so, now that I am here beside you? Why, Dolly, this is not like you! What is it, my sweet?'

But she could only cling to him in a tempest of tears, crying 'Jack, Jack!'

### *SUPERFINE ENGLISH.*

It is the Nemesis of pedantry to be always wrong. Your true prig of a pedant goes immensely out of his way to be vastly more correct than other people, and succeeds in the end in being vastly more ungrammatical, or vastly more illogical, or both at once. The common pronunciation, the common idiom, the common meaning attached to a word, are not nearly good enough or fine enough for him; he must try to get at the original sound, at the strict construction, at the true sense—and he always manages to blunder upon something far worse than the slight error, if error it be, which he attempts to avoid in his superfine correctness. There are people so fastidious that instead of saying ‘camelia,’ the form practically sanctified by usage and by Dumas Fils (for even Dumas Fils can sanctify), they must needs say ‘camella,’ a monstrous hybrid, the true but now somewhat pedantic ‘Latin’ name being really ‘camellia.’ There are people so learned that instead of talking about Alfred the Great, like all the rest of us, they must needs talk about Ælfred, and then pronounce the word as though the first half of it had something or other to do with eels, whereas the true Anglo-Saxon sound thus clumsily expressed is simply and solely the common Alfred. There are people so grammatical that they must needs dispute ‘against’ their opponent instead of disputing with him, in complete ignorance of the fact that the word ‘with’ itself means ‘against’ in the early forms of the English language, and still retains that meaning even now in ‘withstand,’ ‘withhold,’ ‘withdraw,’ and half-a-dozen other familiar expressions. To such good people one is tempted to answer, in the immortal words of Dr. Parr to the inquirer who asked that great scholar whether the right pronunciation was Samaria or Samareia, ‘You may thay Thamareia if you like, but Thamaria ith quite good enough for me.’

The fact is, your genuine pedant falls perpetually into the immense mistake of supposing that one man’s individual reason is going to lead him far more right than the sound instinct of a whole nation. Half-educated people like national schoolmasters and printer’s readers are especially liable to become the victims of this supreme delusion. They have their views on propriety of

speech. They are always correcting other people's good sound idiomatic English into conformity with their own half-educated idea of extreme accuracy. A complete collection of the queries and alterations made in manuscript or proof by the printer's readers would form a beautiful and unique museum of blankly mistaken superfine English. 'Under the circumstances' is never good enough for the printers' reader: he wants to turn it into 'in the circumstances'—a pallid, flabby, meaningless platitude, which emasculates that sound and sensible popular idiom of all its original force and virility. To do a thing 'in the circumstances' is simply to do it: you couldn't possibly do it out of the circumstances; the phrase becomes absurdly pleonastic—a base tag of feeble and utterly insignificant verbiage, like Eliza Jane's 'of course,' and 'in the manner of speaking.' To do a thing 'under the circumstances' is to do it under stress of certain conditions; to do it in view of all the related facts; in short, to act as the circumstances compel you. 'Under' in this sense has a genuine idiomatic meaning, either in English or Latin; it implies that your action is subject to the circumstances, exactly as when we say 'under pain of death,' 'under stress of weather,' 'under these conditions.' The common sense of the English people has hit instinctively upon the right and expressive idiom; the individual genius of the printer's reader, fired with the proud ambition of setting right fifty generations of erring Englishmen, blunders straightway into a foolish and pedantic grammatical nicety, which just deprives the whole phrase of its neat and idiomatic underlying meaning.

Take once more the famous crux of the Two First Chapters, over which whole holocausts (I say whole holocausts advisedly) of superfine critics have long immolated themselves all in vain. The English people, with solid sense, will still go on talking correctly about the two first chapters till the final advent of Macaulay's New Zealander. For they don't mean the First Two, as opposed to the Second Two, and the Third Two, and so forth *ad infinitum*, as the superfine critic would make us believe; they haven't mentally divided all the chapters of the book and all the objects of the universe into regular pairs, two by two, like the unclean animals when they went into the Ark; they mean merely to distinguish the Two First from the Third, and Fourth, and Fifth, and all subsequent chapters whatsoever. In the crucial instance of the Two First Norman kings, we get the full absurdity of the



superfine principle well displayed. There were altogether only three Norman kings (no, dear critic, I have *not* forgotten Stephen), therefore the First Two cannot possibly be contrasted with the Second Two; they can be contrasted with the Third alone. 'But,' says the prying pedant, 'there couldn't conceivably be two firsts; there was one first and one second.' Nonsense! We can have fifty firsts, if the sovereign people so wills it. There were two who came first, and a third who came after them. The genius of the language has settled the question for us long ago, and has settled it a great deal more accurately, too, than the genius of the national schoolmaster could ever hope to do.

But it is not only national schoolmasters who want to impose upon the free and untrammelled English language these petty home-made cobbler emendations. Great scholars themselves often descend to the level of Smelfungus and Martinus Scriblerus; they try to force the infinite energies of a living and active tongue through their own special half-inch ring, like the stones employed for macadamising the highways. A modern historian—the most phenomenally bad writer among great authors of the present generation—has lately given us some strange examples of this superfine critical tendency. He objects, for example, to the phrase 'to decimate,' as applied to the ravages of disease or warfare. As every English writer and speaker uses this phrase, it means simply and solely exactly what it says—to reduce by killing on the average about every tenth man. Nobody, probably, except this good historian, ever employed a word of such transparent etymology in any other than this purely etymological sense. From the very first, it meant that and nothing else. In its ordinary military signification, it was applied to the system of selecting every tenth man for punishment after a general mutiny. But it may just as well mean taking every tenth man in any other way, as by fever or rifle-shot; and it does mean that in ordinary English. Yet about such a very simple and transparent meaning there must needs be haggling and mystification: 'This misuse of the word "decimate," though it has sometimes made its way into the pages of really good writers, is one of the very worst cases of the abuse of language.' Who has abused or misused the word? Nobody, so far as I know, except the critic. This is worse than Jedburgh justice. Our superfine author first imputes to people that they don't mean what they plainly say, and then finds fault with them for saying what they did without meaning it. Especially

does his righteous wrath burn bright against the collocation, 'literally decimated.' I plead guilty myself to having frequently applied this peccant phrase, in newspaper leaders, to armies in action, and I am perfectly certain that I always meant by it just what I said, that the bullets selected for punishment on the average one-tenth of the entire body. It never occurred to me that even a microscopic critic could misunderstand so plain an expression.

Yet even when one uses 'to decimate' metaphorically, in the rough sense of to punish severely, or to destroy a very large proportion, there is surely nothing very wrong or out-of-the-way in the usage. Slight exaggeration and slight metonymy are familiar factors in the genesis of vocabulary.

And this leads us on to a second habit of the microscopic critic, which I venture to describe as the Etymological Fallacy. Your critic happens to know well some one particular language, let us say Greek or Latin; and so far as the words derived from that language are concerned (and so far only) he insists upon every word being rigidly applied in its strict original etymological meaning. He makes no allowance for the natural and beautiful growth of metaphor, and the transference of signification, which must necessarily affect the usage of all words in the course of time; he is aware that the root of 'mutual' in Latin implies reciprocal action, and so he objects to the harmless English colloquial expression 'Our Mutual Friend,' which the genius of Dickens has stamped so indelibly upon the English language that all the ink of all the pedants will never suffice to wash out the hall-mark. I use the mixed metaphor quite intentionally, because it exactly expresses the utter hopelessness of the efforts of banded pedantry.

Just above, for example, I happened to remark that the historian I have in my mind was the most phenomenally bad writer among great authors of the present generation. If his eye should ever chance to light upon these humble and deferential strictures, I rejoice to figure to myself the gleam of Homeric battle-joy with which it will pounce down in mingled delight and fury upon that hazardous adverb. A phenomenon, our *censor morum et verborum* will cry passionately, is an appearance, an object presented to the senses, a thing visible, the opposite of a noumenon, and so forth, and so forth, with his usual lucid amplification. Exactly; that is its restricted technical and philosophical sense; and when we are writing about Greek philosophy or about

the theory of perception we ought, of course, so to employ it. But even this is a slight deviation from the original meaning of the word phenomenon; the verb from which it is derived applies strictly speaking to the sense of sight only, whereas the philosophic phenomenon is the object as such, by whatever sense cognised, even in the crucial instance of a blind man. In modern colloquial English, however, the word phenomenon has had its meaning further altered to imply a strange, remarkable, or unusual phenomenon; of course because at first those adjectives were habitually prefixed to it in newspaper paragraphs about the big gooseberry, the meteoric stone, the great sea-serpent, or the calf with five legs, until at last to the popular intelligence the strangeness and the phenomenon became indissolubly linked together by association in a single idea. Very well then; nowadays, whether we approve of it or whether we don't, the word phenomenon means in plain English a remarkable event or appearance—in short, a regular phenomenon—and the adjective phenomenal, derived from it in this sense, means passing strange or out of the ordinary course of nature. The Infant Phenomenon has made its mark on the literature of the country. If you don't like the word, you have always the usual alternative of lumping it; but that, as a matter of fact, is the sense that phenomenon actually bears in our modern language.

Of course, the word in question didn't originally mean anything of the sort. No, but all words in time change their meanings by just such slight gradations of usage, and one has only got to look in any dictionary to find ten thousand words now in use whose present sense is quite as remote from their etymological signification. And when a certain point of currency has once been attained by any word in any sense, it becomes rank pedantry to protest any longer against the common usage. Did not our good friend Horace long ago tell us that custom is the sole guide to correct speaking? For an excellent example of such pedantry pushed to an extreme, look at the dogmatic objection which some people feel towards speaking of London as the metropolis, or even towards using the ordinary phrases 'Metropolitan Police,' 'Metropolitan Board of Works,' and so forth. According to these double extra-refined purists, Canterbury is really the metropolis of Southern England. And why? Because in later ecclesiastical Latin the Greek word metropolis meant the mother-city from whose bishopric other bishoprics derived their origin. But if we are

going to be so very classical and Hellenic as this, we might respond that by a still older Greek usage metropolis means the mother-state of a colony, and so that neither Canterbury nor London but Sleswick-Holstein is the original and only genuine metropolis of England. Is not this the very midsummer madness of purist affectation? The English language is the English language; and in that language metropolis by long prescription means the chief city or capital of a country. Metropolitan, by Act of Parliament, has a certain definite relation to the London district; and as Pym well said, 'There have none gone about to break Parliaments, but in the end Parliaments have broken them.' Even so, the people are stronger than any person.

For the truth is, it is quite useless for any one man to set himself up single-handed against the irresistible march of nations. Languages grow and are not made; they are the outcome of deep-seated popular forces, and the meanings which the people impose upon words are the meanings they have got to bear in the long-run, whether the pedants like it or no. (The microscopic critic corrects, 'or not.' He hasn't the soul of grammar within him to tell him that the other is far the more graphic and vivid expression of the two.) Professor This and Professor That may protest as long as they like against the phrases which all the well-bred and well-educated people of their time habitually use; but the protest will surely die with them, and in the next generation the abomination against which they raised their hands in horror will be included by Professor Epigonus, their accredited successor, in his new great etymological dictionary of the English language. Did not Swift consider *mob* slangy and vulgar, and did not Samuel Rogers stoutly declare that while *contemplate* was bad enough, *bálcony* fairly made him sick? The poor gentleman was himself accustomed to *contémpplate* nature with the accent on the second syllable, and to employ *balcóny* as a rhyme to poney in his familiar verse. And that was only thirty years ago! Abdiel of 'correct' pronunciation, if he had lived to the present day he might have been stared at for talking still of his *balcóny*, as people are now for being greatly obleeged or for possessing very remarkable trays of character.

'But there are some popular misuses of words which are really and truly dependent upon pure blundering.' Yes, of course, and if possible it may perhaps be worth while to nip these in the bud before they have expanded into full-blown flowers of English

rhetoric. For example, there is the poor much-abused verb 'to predicate.' In its logical use, to predicate bears a very distinct and definite meaning, to which it would be highly desirable universally to confine it—if it were feasible. But, unfortunately, these matters lie outside the power of either the pedant or the scholar; they fall within the province of the people alone. Now the people, as represented by the newspaper leader-writer—in nine cases out of ten a University man—have decided that to predicate and to predict mean pretty much the same thing, and have determined accordingly, with utter recklessness of etymological correctness, to predicate a British victory in Africa, or a fine day for the races on Wednesday. I won't deny that to the classical and logical ear this is trying; and for my own part, as long as there is anybody left who cares to fight for the old sense in this matter, I enroll myself fearlessly under the conservative banner. But I don't believe we shall do much good by it in the end; at best, we shall only prolong the life of 'to predicate' (in the logical sense) for a single generation. We are nursing a hopeless patient. Our children will be brought up predicating all sorts of woes or joys for the future in the most reckless fashion, and will laugh at us for old fogeys when we venture to express our moribund disapprobation. It is no use putting ourselves straight in the path of a revolution. The revolution will roll calmly over us, and leave us crushed as flat behind it as the mild Hindoo beneath the car of Juggernaut. 'So much the worse for the coo.' Mrs. Partington was a very noble-minded woman, but she didn't succeed in expelling the Atlantic. It was grand of Ajax to defy the lightning, but the lightning probably took the defiance out of him with great promptitude.

The car of Juggernaut reminds one of another form of superfine nicety, which consists in transliterating very outlandish foreign names in English with a grotesque affectation of Puritan precision. In our newspapers nowadays the great idol of Orissa just alluded to is called Jaganáth. The Orientalists are indeed the worst of offenders in this direction—and verily they have their reward. The moment we see in an article in the *Athenæum*, or the *Saturday*, the mysterious forms of A'ali ben Sa'adi, or Sanskrit texts, or Muhámmadan law, or other pretty words where the full stops go on top of the letters or underneath them, instead of at the side, and the commas are playfully interspersed among the meandering syllables, we know at once that that is an article intended to be

skipped, and we skip it accordingly with great unanimity. Dr. W. W. Hunter, the *bête noire* of the old Indian civilian, is a mighty reformer in this respect. He would have us spell Meerut, Mīrath, and Kurrahee, Karāchi. Now, this sort of purism is all very well in technical literature and in the Proceedings of the Royal Asiatic Society: nobody (except the experts) ever reads them, and so the barbarous jargon of the superfine pedants does nobody any serious harm there. But when it comes to poisoning the mind of youth with Kwong-fu-tzi instead of the familiar Confucius, turning the Great Mogul of our innocent boyhood into an unpronounceable Mughal, and disfiguring the delightful adventures of Haroun al Rashid by a pedantic peppering of his name with assorted dots, commas, and accents, we all feel that accuracy itself, precious as it doubtless is, may yet be purchased at too great a cost. What possible good can it do to sprinkle the Arabian Nights with somebody's impracticable system of transliterating Arabic, with the sole result that ingenuous youth will be deterred at first sight by the unfamiliar appearance of the One-eyed Calender in his new dress, and give to the hideous hash of consonants and vowels some sound far more unlike the original Arabic than even the first crude attempt of the early translators?

The fact which all these good people seem to forget is simply this, that English is a distinct and separate language, and that no Englishman—not even a pedant—can be impartially versed in Greek and Sanskrit, Cree and Objibway, Hittite and Assyrian, Chinese and Hottentot, Welsh and Gaelic, all together. Life is short, and Cardinal Mezzofanti left no issue. Greek and Latin, French and German, are quite as much as most of us find time to cram into the threescore years and ten of human existence according to the Psalmist. And indeed, we have all seen how this modern transliterating craze first set in from small beginnings. It was the Hellenists who started it; they thought it fine to talk about Thukydides. This was such a brilliant success for the man who originated the mania that somebody else bethought him of capping it by writing Thukydids. Once the ball was thus set rolling, we went rapidly through all the variations of Thoukydids and Thoukudids, of Æschylus, Aischylus, Aischulus, and Aischulos, which latter monstrosity I have actually seen in printer's ink, staining the virgin purity of good white paper.

The Hellenists having thus achieved a noble revolution, the Anglo-Saxons next prepared to have an innings. They discarded



the beautiful and immoral Elfrida of our unvexed schooldays in favour of a colourless and unpronounceable Ælfthryth; they 'threw back' (as the Darwinians say) from Lady Godiva to the terrific Godgifu; and they reverted from Awdrey, short for Etheldreda, to the primitive barbarism of an East Anglian Æthelthryth. I don't deny that our early English ancestors themselves were bold enough and linguists enough to use undismayed these fearsome compounds of discordant consonants: and what is more, after paying due heed to the minute instructions of Mr. Ellis and Mr. Sweet—*arcades ambo*—I even know how to pronounce them myself with tolerable correctness, because I happen to be personally interested in Athels and Ethels. But I don't expect other people to share my hobby; and I do maintain that the proper place for such strange and un-English-looking words is in technical literature, that they are of use to the Anglo-Saxon scholar alone, and that they merely tend to deter, dismay, mislead, and disgust the average modern English reader. And when it comes to Pali and Coptic, to cuneiform inscriptions and Egyptian hieroglyphics, the attempt thus to force down our throats, like a nasty bolus, the results of an alien and specialist research can have no effect save that of checking and preventing the diffusion of knowledge. If you want to make any subject popularly comprehensible and popularly interesting, you must divest it of all that is harsh, crude, technical, and dull; you must translate it freely from the jargon of the specialist into the pure, simple, idiomatic English of everyday conversation.

One word as to the general underlying principle which pervades all these manifestations of superfine English. They are all alike the result of taking too much trouble about mere expression. Just as self-consciousness in manner produces the affected airs and graces, the poses and attitudes, the laughs and giggles, of Miss Jemima, so self-consciousness in modes of expression produces the absurd over-particular nicety of the national schoolmaster and the educated pedant. Always inquiring anxiously whether this, that, or the other word or phrase is absolutely correct, according to their own lights, such people go wrong through the very force of their desire to go right, often coupled with an inadequate sense of the deepest and inmost underlying grammatical and etymological meaning. In all these matters, first thoughts are best. Very young ladies in their letters are always falling into ingenuous errors, due to the bad habit of



thinking before they speak; they write first, 'His health was drunk,' and then, alarmed at the apparent inebriety of that harmless past participle, alter it incontinently to 'His health was drank.' They correct 'Between you and me' into 'Between you and I,' and substitute 'elder' for 'older,' or 'less' for 'smaller,' on the strength of obsolete rules imperfectly understood from Lindley Murray. It is just the same with older and more learned pedants. Instead of 'These sort of people go anywhere,' they write 'This sort of people goes anywhere'—an impossible idiom in speaking—not perceiving that popular instinct has rightly caught at the implied necessity for a plural subject to the really and essentially plural verb. They insist upon replacing sound and sensible current phrases by stiff and awkward hothouse idioms. They object to our talking about the vandalism of railway contractors, apparently on the somewhat grotesque ground that the historical Vandals never in their lives constructed a railway. But if we are invariably to use words in none but their primitive and naked etymological sense—if we are to give up all the wealth of metaphor and allusiveness which gradually encrusts and enriches every simple phrase—if we are to discard 'worsted' because it is no longer spun at Worstead in Norfolk, and eschew 'Gothic' because a distinguished scholar considers the Goths were not really such goths after all—why, all our writing in future will tend to become as dull as ditchwater.

# RAINBOW GOLD.<sup>1</sup>

A NOVEL.

BY DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY.

BOOK VI.—*continued.*

HOW THE RAINBOW GOLD GREW REAL.

## CHAPTER IV.

EZEKIEL ROUND sat in an arm-chair by the fireside at Konak Cottage, in the same room and the same arm-chair in which Job Round had died. Ezekiel was thinking of nothing and looking at nothing, and smoking. His eyes were dull and fishlike, his head was pushed a little forward with a look which betokened readiness to contradict anything, his legs and shoulders were as self-willed as ever, and his red fists lay one on each thigh, as if in expectation of immediate conflict.

Sarah sat sewing at a window in the same room, but sometimes her needle and the work at which she plied it would lie together in her lap whilst she looked with unseeing eyes at the rain-beaten garden and the dim fields beyond. It was one of those days in late summer when rain can seem more desolate than at any other time, and the atmosphere was soaked with water like a sponge. The weather was cold, and a cheerful little fire burned upon the hearth. Except for the ticking of a clock the house was so still that the patter of the rain and the rustle of the wind-tormented trees were as loud as if it had been night-time.

Whatever change had taken place in Sarah's aspect had but ripened and sweetened her unusual beauty. The arch brightness which had once distinguished her was gone, of course. The happiest marriage and motherhood—and marriage and motherhood are a woman's best felicities—would have seen that innocent bright archness fade. That had belonged to youth and youth's high spirits. Now her face was grave and thoughtful, and any one who knew her well and loved her would have seen a pitiful brave sadness in it.

<sup>1</sup> This novel has been dramatised by the author.

'My pipe's gone out,' said Ezekiel, suddenly. His voice had gone shrill with age, but it betokened a dogged humour even yet.

'Shall I light it for you, grandfather?' she asked. 'It wants filling again; shall I fill it?' He clung to it at first, but her supple persuasive fingers gradually released it from his hand. She filled it for him and gave it back to him with a lighted spill, and he began to puff away with a sulky gravity. With his clean-shaven red face and his bald head he looked like a big baby, who had come into the world resolved to be satisfied with nothing.

'I say,' he said, looking at his granddaughter with lack-lustre eyes, 'dost thee remember my son Job? He was a king among men was my son Job. He growed after he was two-an'-twenty, and he stood six foot four. Like Saul, head and shoulders higher than his brethren. I acted very bad to my son Job. I cussed him out of house an' home, and now I do't think he'll iver come back again. He wanted to marry Armstrong's gell—the printer in the High Street. That's what I cussed him out of house an' home for. I knowed he'd never come back no more, and I knowed I was a fewl. I've allays been a fewl, or else I should niver ha' trusted my money with young Whittaker. Didst thee know young Whittaker? There's none o' th' ode folks left i' Castle Barfield i' these daysen. Things was a deal gayer when I was a lad than they be now. Cudgil playin's gone clean out. So's pidgin flyin'. The young lads ud meet once or twice a week of summer evenin's when I was young, an' have a stand-up fight i' the Warrin Lezzurs for a match. Four ud fight wi' four, an' then two ud fight wi' two, an' them two ud fight together, and the mon as won was champion. Ah! they'd come from miles around. There's no sperrit of enj'yment left. My pipe's gone out.'

Sarah was too accustomed to the old man's wanderings to pay much heed to them, or to be greatly wounded by them, even when they touched the sorest places in her heart. She arose again patiently and gave the old boy a light, and then went back to her sewing and her own thoughts.

'He stuck out like a mon,' said Ezekiel, 'and I liked him none the wuss for it, I can tell thee. But I wouldn't ha' let on as I admired him, mind thee, for a million o' money. I used to see him a walkin' along Castle Barfield high road, six foot four of him, and as broad as a barn door, an' ne'er a bit o' waste from crown to sole; the strongest man in England I reckon he was. He'd walk by me without a word, just a friendlike soort of a nod

he'd gi'e me, but that was all; and "Damin thy eyes," I used to say, "I love thee for it." A strikin' handsome lad was my son Job.'

Then he complained once more that his pipe was out, and, Sarah having again supplied him with a light, he fell into a sort of coma, and sat smoking and seeing nothing and thinking of nothing.

There were two windows to the room, one looking on the fields and another on the garden path and the gate which stood at the end of it. The side window was overshadowed by a tree, and on this dim day the light was somewhat dull there. Sarah gathered up her sewing and set it down on the sofa below the brighter window. Then seating herself beside it she began to sew in earnest. Grandfather Round wanted luxuries now and again, and Sarah had sacrificed some part of her own small property to save the family name from the disgrace of actual bankruptcy, so that she was somewhat put to it at times to make both ends meet, and had recourse to her needle to supply deficiencies which might otherwise have grown serious. She was a skilful fine needlewoman, and the work of her hands did more to keep herself and the broken old grandfather than anybody knew.

She was sunk deep in thought, but busy all the while. Clem was repeating his own verses in the smiling summer field above the Jacob's Ladder, and her father was lying below the hedge, as yet unseen, in the lane at the end of the field. She was coming to him in her thoughts, and Clem's voice was in her ears.

Green fields and falling waters, and, afar,  
—Faint as the echo of his watery war,  
Old Ocean leaves within the twisted shell—  
The peaceful chiming of the convent bell.

Just then she heard the click of the latch gate. It sounded more seldom now than in old days. She looked up and started with a little cry, for there, buffeted and blown by the rain and wind, was none other than Grandfather Armstrong, whom she had fancied a hundred miles away. She arose and opened the door to welcome him.

'Grandfather Armstrong!' she cried. 'What good wind has blown you here?' She drew him within-doors, and kissed him heartily. The grey man took both her hands and held them wide apart, and began to dandle each hand gaily in his own. He was flushed with the rain and the wind, and was a trifle out of breath.

'I'm thinking it's a good wind, my dear,' he said. 'I'm

thinking it's a good wind, but I can't be altogether sure yet. How's Mr. Round?' he asked, dropping his granddaughter's hands and advancing to Ezekiel. 'How do you find yourself? D'ye know me, man? Losh! I don't believe the puir man knows me, Sarah.'

'He will know you by-and-by,' she said. 'He sleeps with his eyes open, I think—poor old Grandfather Round. Let me take off your wet coat and put it at the kitchen fire to dry. Where have you come from?'

'I was in London this morning,' returned Armstrong. 'I came down straight to see you.'

'On purpose to see me,' she asked, standing with the wet garment in her hand. 'You came on purpose to see me?'

'Ay, lass! Put away the coat and we'll begin to have a talk together. I'm thinking 'twas a good wind that blew me here, my dawtie. Put awa' the co't,' he said, relapsing for an instant into his broadest accent, 'an' we'll hae a crack.'

She obeyed him, and returned with a face of expectation.

'My son Job,' said Ezekiel as she entered, 'was the strikingest handsome man i' Castle Barfield. He was a traveller in his day, and could talk the foreign tongues, whether to the Frenchies or the Germanies, or them trapesing gipsy chaps.'

'He rarely speaks of anything but father,' Sarah said, in answer to Armstrong's eyes. 'He is breaking fast.'

'He's no complaint, has he?' Armstrong asked, speaking unconsciously in a half-whisper.

'No,' she said. 'The doctor comes to see him now and then, but more for old acquaintance' sake than anything. He says he will not last long, but he has no illness and no pain. Senile decay, he calls it.'

'Ay,' responded Armstrong; 'he'll be nigh on eighty-five years of age. Poor auld lad! Eh, eh! his worldly troubles are well nigh at an end, and I doubt he'll have no mind to be brightened at the last. Sit down, lass; I've something of the utmost importance to say to ye.'

Sarah sat down upon the sofa by the rain-bleared window, and her grandfather, seating himself beside her, took both her hands in his. He looked bright and elated, and wide as she might send her guesses she could find no reason for his visit and his obvious gladness and excitement.

'You must know, to begin with,' he said, holding both her

hands, and now and then lifting them and waving them airily—‘you must know, to begin with, that David is a clerk in the office of a stock and share broker in a street in London that goes by the name of Copthall Street. A while ago a gentleman makes application to this stockbroker to know whether some nine or ten years ago his uncle did or did not buy through his hands a certain number of shares—Government annuities, or what not. I’m no man for these affairs, and ye mustn’t expect me to talk like a banker, but I’ll make you as wise as I am myself. The object of the gentleman’s inquiry was to get at a certain sum o’ money in the Bank of England, as I understand, believing that the sum had been lent to the Government of the country aforetime by his uncle. Am I making things clear to ye, dawtie, or am I befogging a fog? It’s a bit of a fog to me when I come to the details, but I’m feeling clear till now.’

‘I think I understand,’ said Sarah, not quite knowing what to make of this exordium. ‘I am sure I understand.’

‘Very well. There are rocks ahead, maybe,’ said Armstrong gaily, ‘but we’re in smooth water for the meantime. The gentleman was his uncle’s sole heir, and had reason, from some memoranda in the old man’s writing, to believe that he had thus disposed of a sum of money. He applies to David’s master to ascertain the facts. David is set at work to search through a set of books which detail all his employer’s business for the period, and he lights upon the entry. It relates to a matter of some five thousand pounds, and the gentleman’s in the fairest possible way to get the money. Now I’m sure a girl with your good heart will be glad o’ that.’

He laughed then, and swung her hands so gaily that she could scarce do less than give him an answering smile.

‘I am sure,’ she said, ‘I hope the gentleman may have his own and live long to enjoy it. But why are you so pleased? It isn’t you?—you have no uncle. Is it David?—no, he has no uncle either, and besides he only searched the books. Oh, grandfather, is it Clem—is it poor Clem? Oh, if it were Clem I should be glad indeed.’

‘No,’ returned Armstrong, ‘it’s a man whose name I never hard before. A pairfect stranger, my dear, but we’ll just be glad he has a fair chance of getting his own, for that’s no more than everyday human good-nature; eh, lass!’

‘Certainly,’ she said, looking at him with some bewilderment.

His blue eyes twinkled with an innocent mirth and mischief, but all on a sudden he became serious and tender.

‘In looking through those books, Sarah, David found another name, only a page or two away from the one I’ve been speaking of. My lass, I’m thinking ye’re going to be a vary walthy woman.’

‘I?’ said Sarah.

‘You,’ replied Armstrong. ‘The name that David found was your poor father’s, lass. Job Round, of Konak Cottage, Castle Barfield, gentleman. And there in plain black and white was the record of a transfer out of foreign stocks—I’m not in the least understanding what I’m telling you, but this is the gist of David’s statement, I’m pretty certain—a transfer out of foreign stocks into the new three per cent. annuities. That is to say, for I’ll be as clear as I can, that he had sold something and bought something else. Now the actual murder’s out. It’s not settled yet—ye can’t go up and lay hands upon the money at once, but there’s little doubt ye’ll get it. You’re not upset in any way, or feeling faint, are ye?’

‘No,’ said Sarah, looking at him in grave wonderment. ‘Why should I?’

‘Ay, ay!’ returned Armstrong, ‘why should ye? But there’s a pretty big handful of people in the warld that would. It just made my auld head spin for wonderment and pleasure when I hard it. But ye’re not a warldly minded lass, and never were. Ye don’t even ask how much it is?’

‘Is it much?’ she asked. Her mind was busy with other things; Clem and Grandfather Armstrong need be poor no longer. She had been told already that she was going to be a wealthy woman.

‘I’ll tell ye how much it is,’ he said, releasing her hands to grope in the pocket of his shrunken grey coat. ‘Here’s David’s figures. The sum transferred was ninety-seven thousand five hundred and sixty-seven pounds. The compound interest since then has been, so David says, nineteen thousand five hundred and sixty-three pounds. Altogether a hundred and seventeen thousand one hundred and thirty pounds, yielding an annual income of three thousand five hundred and thirteen pounds eighteen shillings. Upon my word, it’s just a glory to pronounce the words. I’ve felt like a deputy Rothschild all the way down from London with the figures in my pocket. Give your auld granddad a kiss, lass. God bless ye!’



And then, quite suddenly, the little grey old man leapt to his feet and began to foot it heel and toe, with one hand aloft and the other set jauntily on his hip, and more suddenly still fell back upon the sofa, and hid his grey old face in his hands and sobbed for joy.

'Lass,' he said, 'I'm glad at heart for your sake. I'm glad at heart.'

'But how,' she asked him with wondering eyes, 'did father ever become possessed of such a sum of money? And how was it that having it he never used it and never spoke of it?'

'That's more than I can say, lass,' said Armstrong, 'and more than man will ever know. But since it was Job Round's money there's one certain thing—it was honestly come by——'

'Grandfather!'

'Ay, ay, lass! we're just o' the same mind about that. David tells me that money kept at interest doubles in twenty-one years. It's seven-and-twenty since your father came home from foreign parts, and in all probability brought the nucleus of this fortune with him. And it may have been multiplied in trade.'

'Have you told Clem?'

'Not a word. And won't till everything is fixed and certain. There's a lot to do yet, but everything's fairly certain. Safe, I should say, in the end. But here's the *modus operandi*, as David sets it down. First ye go to a lawyer, and ye give him dates and names and figures. Then the stock has to be traced in the bank books. Then they'll want evidence of your title, and ye'll have to produce—I've got it down here somewhere on the inside of an auld envelope—ye'll have to produce letters of administration of the personal effects and estate of your poor father. That ye'll get from the Probate Court, after the requisite formalities of oaths and the payment of court fees and duty. Then this grant of administration is to be lodged at the bank with evidence of identity. Then when the folk at the bank are quite sure ye're the right person, they'll make y' advertise in the papers for the whole world to know, so that any other claimant may turn up, and they'll set a limit of time beyond which they'll wait for nobody else, and at the end of that limit ye get the fortune. I've been a grandfather till ye from the day of your birth, and now I'm as good as a lawyer till ye.'

'And how long will it take to do all this?' asked Sarah. 'If they would make me rich enough to help poor Clem!'

'They'll make ye rich enough to help poor Clem,' said her grandfather, 'but I'm sore afraid poor Clem won't take your help.'

This was the greatest surprise which had yet befallen her, and she looked at Armstrong in bewilderment.

'Not take my help? Clem not take my help? What *can* you mean?'

'My pipe's out,' said Ezekiel, waking from his state of half-unconsciousness. Sarah arose to attend to him, still looking backward in inquiry at Armstrong. 'Hello!' cried Ezekiel, 'who's that? That thee, Armstrong? Been a playin' at chess along wi' Job? Sarah, my gell, get me my boots.'

'Let me fill your pipe again, grandfather,' said Sarah.

'I don't want the pipe filled again,' replied Ezekiel; 'get me my boots, my gell.'

'You don't want your boots, grandfather,' she answered. 'It's raining fast. You couldn't go out if you had them.'

'Maybe I couldn't and maybe I could,' said the old man with all his ancient doggedness. 'Thee get me my boots.' He began to chuckle. 'Armstrong,' he said, still weakly wagging his head and shaking his sides with laughter, 'dost thee remember Bill Hines, the blind fiddler?'

'No,' said Armstrong; 'I've heard tell of the man, but he died before I came to Barfield.'

'Let me see,' mumbled Ezekiel wheezily. 'How ode am I? Eighty-five. Then it's over sixty 'ear ago. I was a bit larkish when I was a young un', an' full o' fun an' invention an' all sorts o' divilry. So one day I ties a bit of a ode tin kettle to Bill Hines' dog's tail. To see the dog a runnin', and poor Bill a hodin' on, you'd ha' died o' loffin. I gi'en him a sixpence after it, but he could niver be browt to think well on me again. Whenever he heerd my voice a speakin' after that, he'd sing out "Zekiel Round, thee'st die in thy boots." Me and ode Bill 'll have a bit of a snigger at that when I come to tell him. Get me my boots, Sarah, there's a good wench. I'll mek ode Bill's words come true.'

'Grandfather,' said Sarah, 'you mustn't talk in that way. Here's your pipe; now you must be good, and take it.'

'I want my boots,' returned Ezekiel, 'and I'll ha' my boots or else I'll know who's master i' this house!'

'Give him his boots, lass,' said Armstrong. 'It'll do him no harm to have them.'

So Ezekiel got his boots, and insisted on having them pulled on and laced. The operation seemed to be strangely fatiguing to him, but he laughed when it was over, and was heard to mutter once or twice—

‘I’ll tell ode Bill of this to-night. We’ll have a bit of a snigger about this, me an’ ode Bill wool.’

‘He’s very strange, Sarah,’ said Armstrong. ‘I’m a little alarmed for him by this wild talk of his.’

‘He has not been himself for many weeks,’ she answered. ‘He wanders often, and says so many strange things that I have grown used to him. He is falling asleep, I think. What was the meaning of the extraordinary thing you said of Clem?’

‘I’d have been wiser not to say it,’ he said; ‘but I think ye’ll find it true.’

‘But why should I find it true, grandfather? Clem has not begun—’ she paused a little, and her beautiful bosom heaved—‘to dislike me?’ Her face clouded and paled. ‘If I couldn’t help Clem and you, where would be the use of having money? Why should Clem refuse me if I had it to offer him?’

‘Ye must leave me to deal with Clem, my dear—that’s all. I’ll say no more.’

‘But you must say more, grandfather—indeed you must. What have I done to Clem?’

‘Nothing—nothing, my dear. Just nothing in the wide wide world. The puir lad’s just as friendly and as kindly disposed as ever. Now don’t think anything more about it. It’s not the least little affeer o’ mine, and I’m an auld fool for my pains. Now, now, now, ma dear girl, not a ward.’

But Sarah was not to be thus silenced, and, sweet as she was, she had her share of feminine obstinacy. To be told that if she were rich Clem would take nothing at her hands to relieve the bitterness of his own poverty so wounded her that it brought the tears to her patient eyes. She had loved Clem always since she could remember—dearly.

‘Grandfather, you must tell me.’ The old man saw the tears in her eyes and began to move uneasily. ‘Tell me,’ she said pleadingly, and set a hand on his shoulder—‘tell me.’

‘Eh!’ said Armstrong, rising and rumpling his grey hair, ‘what a hell o’ witchcraft lies in the small oarb o’ one particular tear! Shakespeare, ma friend, ye’d learn that or ever ye quitted the banks of Avon. What’ll I tell ye, my child?’

'Tell me why Clem should refuse to take help from me if it should come into my power to offer it.'

'The lass that will to Cupar maun to Cupar,' said the old man with a sigh of desperation. 'It's just this then. He'll take your money and you together if you're flang straight at him, but ye'll never get *that* lad out of all the lads ye know to take a penny out o' charity from the girl he loves. That I know, anyway.'

To say that this came as a surprise to Sarah seems to say but little. Both hands went swiftly to her face, and she blushed scarlet. And yet surely it was nothing of a surprise that Clem loved her. The impulse which had led her to hide her face had come too swiftly to be repelled or considered, but she recovered from it in an instant.

'Grandfather, what do you mean by putting such foolish ideas in a woman's head?'

'I'm not the sagest o' mankind, lass, but I've just sense enough to be able to smell what's under my nose. It's eight or nine years old with him. And the talk runs in half the books ever I read that ye may trust a woman to know a thing o' that sort. I suppose ye may, if the man tells her. Ye'll help Clem, my dear, for that's only natural and on the obvious face of things. But ye'll have to find a way of doing it, for I know the heart of the lad, and its pride and its soreness, and not a pennypiece will he take that looks like charity from you, of all the women that live to plague the souls o' men.'

'Clem has no right to be proud with me,' she said, almost in anger. 'And unless Clem would share the money with me I would tell him that I would never touch a penny of it. I would ask him how he dare keep me out of my rights in that way, for if he would not touch it I would not touch it, and I would see if he would rob me by his obstinacy.'

She was half laughing through her blushes before she had come to the end of this irresistible piece of womanly logic, and Armstrong was twinkling at her between his spectacles and his eyebrows with a look of humour which can only be described by one word, to find which we must fly to his own native language. The look and the sense of fun that created it were purely Scottish, as the word is, and the sense of fun and the look were 'pawky.' You may search the vocabularies of the world in vain; there exists no translation.

'Well, well,' he said, 'ye'll settle that between yourselves, I make no manner of a doubt. The coney's are but a feeble folk, says the Wise Man, yet they make their dwellings in the rocks.'

'And that means——?'

'That a woman's more cunning than a coney, lass. I'm fit to talk any sort o' nonsense. But ye *can* burrow your way through that difficulty if ye care to; the coming year's Bissextile.'

Sarah laughed again, but she was still blushing.

'How old are you, grandfather?' she asked.

'Ah,' said he, 'that's as much as to say "when does a man arrive at years o' discretion?" Maybe the days of my discretion are over, but I've told you no more than the serious truth, lass, and ye must just turn it over and look at it. A straight back's a fine thing, but a pure heart's a finer. The lad's a lion, though he roars, after Bottom's fashion, like a sucking dove. A brave spirit; as gentle a nature as ever was informed with life. Turn it over, and luik at all sides of it. Here's this poor old heart,' indicating Ezekiel, 'fast growing cold, and not much longer to need the warmth of yours. Ye'll be lonely when ye have nobody to fret for, and ye're not the sort of woman that can waste the treasures of her soul upon a lap-dog, or a parrot that can say "Scratch Polly." . . . But meantime here's serious business on hand. Will ye give me leave to go out and see a lawyer in your name? Best get the best man here, where ye're known, and where ye'll be able now and then to jog his mind about affairs. It's not worth while to waste a day, for the sooner the thing's begun the earlier 'twill be over.'

'Shall I not be wanted?' she asked.

'I fancy not, at first,' he answered. 'And ye wouldn't like to leave the old man lonely. I'll be away an hour at the utmost, and when I come back again ye'll give me a cup of tea.'

He struggled anew into his overcoat, borrowed an umbrella, and set out. Sarah took up her sewing, and after a stitch or two suffered it to fall into her lap. The day had brought strange news.

'A heart like Clem's,' she thought, 'would be a better treasure than gold to a woman who loved him.'

She had loved him always, dearly. That was a matter which admitted of no doubt whatever. But to marry him was another thing.

Yet if Clem would only consent to be wealthy on that condition? If he would not even consent to part with poverty on

any other condition? Grandfather Round was asleep, and she did not even breathe these thoughts to herself. Yet as they passed through her mind she blushed, and a second time she hid her face between her hands.

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## CHAPTER V.

THE medal hung with its edge to the window, and Clem could see each side of it. He polished the bleared window with his sleeve and tried to make out the inscription, but the surface was aslant to the light, and glittered so that he could see nothing of it but the one word 'Rocher' and a line with these signs at the beginning of it—'42° 49'.' But there was no mistaking it. He had been suffered to handle it when he was yet a mere child, when Job came home again and would take him between his knees and tell him stories. He had found years and years ago a quaint face in the Sultan's twisted monogram, and he could see it now. But whatever aids to memory he found were altogether unconscious, and he had no need to examine them. He knew the medal again as one knows the face of a friend.

He was a man transformed. Dingy Fleet Street vanished, and the city clerk might as well have hustled Vesuvius as this shabby little figure. For one moment the poor thing's soul went back to youth and Castle Barfield, and the sun was on the fields, and the lowing of far-off oxen was clearer in his ears than the growl of cab and omnibus wheels, and a face divinely sweet was close to his. The supremest miracle of emotion Nature chose to work that hour had his heart for its field. He sprang at a bound from the lowest night of despair to the very mountain top of morning hope.

No man can paint a hurricane, and a storm is but a poor symbol, after all, of tumult in the soul. But when the first great throes of joy were over, calm came to him and the quiet of a settled purpose. He had memories which he would not have bartered for any possible delights, and there was no thought or shadow of a thought of any benefit to himself which might arise from this astounding accident. The memory of Sarah filled his heart. He saw her ways made smooth, and he seemed to see her, like the sun, making life bright for the poor, cheering cold hearts and gladdening her own.

The first thought that recalled him to himself touched him with an almost aguish fear. There was not a millionaire in London, knowing what he knew, who would not give twenty thousand pounds for that medal, and here it hung in a window in the very middle of London's traffic, ready for the first man who paused to buy it out of curiosity or to recognise its value as he had done. He had to tear himself away and leave it, if only for the briefest time, whilst he secured at any sacrifice enough to make it his own. As he thought thus the clock struck seven. He heard it, but still lingered. Unreasonable as the fear might seem, it tugged at his heart as he forced himself from the place and hurried to the solicitor's office in Shoe Lane.

He was panting and trembling when he reached the door, and had hard work to control himself.

'I might have left your money with the clerk,' said the solicitor, 'but I wanted to see you personally. The lawyers on the other side—what's their name? Hodson, Son, and Cave, of Castle Barfield—write me that their clients are ready to pay off the mortgage.'

'Very well,' said Clem, holding the back of a chair to steady himself. 'That is what I could have wished for. I want to ask you to let me have two pounds ten shillings to-night. If you will buy the mortgage yourself you shall have it at fifty pounds less than its value, provided you can give me an open cheque on Monday. I am going abroad. I have pressing and urgent business which cannot bear to be delayed a day.'

'Hum,' said the lawyer, 'you must give me a little time to think about that.'

'You don't make fifty pounds every day of your life,' Clem answered. 'Draw up a deed transferring the thing from me to you, and you shall have it for fifty pounds less than its actual value. I will be here on Monday to sign it. I would start to-morrow if I could.'

'Haven't been robbing a bank, have you, Bache?' asked the solicitor.

'I have urgent business abroad,' said Clem. 'Will you buy the mortgage and take the terms I offer, or must I go elsewhere?'

'You pay the expenses of the transfer. Very well, I'll take it.'

'When must I be here? At ten on Monday morning? Let



me have five pounds now in place of the two pounds ten I asked for. I have some debts to pay, and I can afford to waste no time on Monday.'

'You're strangely excited,' said the lawyer. 'What is it all about? Have you come in for a fortune?'

'I am going abroad,' said Clem, with an almost hysteric break in his voice, 'to take possession of fifty thousand pounds.' The lawyer stared at him. 'Pray don't keep me waiting,' Clem besought him; 'I am pressed for time. Let me have five pounds.'

'It's all very odd, you know,' returned the man of law. 'Give me your I O U and you can have it. I have security.'

Clem gave the required I O U, received the money, and was gone, with a devouring fear that the medal had disappeared. It hung there still, and by-and-by was in his hands—his own. He hugged it to his breast with both hands, and his heart gloated over it. He walked homeward through the dismal rain as an enfranchised spirit might walk through the fields of heaven. The rain came down, and the yellow gaslights bleared through it like drunkard's eyes, and the crowd jostled him about the slippery pavement. But there were warmth and sunshine within him and widespread peace, and an unselfish sacred Hope with music in the murmur of her wings.

When he had reached his own sordid room, he lit his candle and sat down to look at the medal. He kissed it and wept over it, and knelt to thank God for it for Sarah's sake. He examined it over and over again until every word and every line imprinted itself upon his memory.

Latitude  $42^{\circ} 49'$ ; longitude  $21^{\circ} 32\frac{1}{2}'$ . A deep-cut sketch of a rock of peculiar form with the word 'Rocher' over it. An irregularly shaped figure with the word 'mare' within it, and a smaller sketch of the rock engraved upon its right-hand side. Then in the centre of the medal another irregular figure with these words below it—'Baba Konak Montagne. Mare au pied. Sud.' Then, below this, 'Entre mare et rocher. Ligne directe.'

He went out into the streets again, bearing his treasure with him. He hugged it in the pocket in which he carried it, and his excited mind made pictures of a thousand dreadful chances by which he might lose it. Yet all this was no more than the play of waters upon the surface when the depths lie still; and in his inmost heart he was certain that heaven had made him the

messenger and the worker of Sarah's happiness. He bought ink and paper and went back home again, and then sat down to write.

He set down his wonderful discovery and all his knowledge of the story which went before it. He knew nothing, and could therefore tell nothing, of the means by which the money had at first been gained, for Mr. Bowling, in deference to an instinct of his own, had suppressed his knowledge of the great Del Oro swindle. It had occurred to him that a man of scrupulous honesty might want to trace the original owners of the money, and he had not cared to be disturbed by any conscientious weakness of that sort. So Clem had no more to tell than that a party of adventurers had buried this money many years ago; that they had been pursued by a party more desperate than themselves and dispossessed of their fortune in the very act of concealing it, and that in turn they had been compelled to fly from justice and to leave the treasure still buried. Then he set down that a new party, years later, of whom Job Round was one, had learned the secret, but how he could not say; that two of them also had been compelled to abandon their share of the spoil, and that it lay there still. He transcribed the details of the medal, and went on to say that he did this in case his own enterprise should fail, for he was weak and might break down, though he believed that Heaven was on his side and would guide and guard him to the end.

When he came to the close of this statement, which, though briefly and barely summarised here, took three or four hours in writing, he set down these words:—

‘If I should fail, Sarah will find stronger and abler hands to carry out the purpose which has been too great a weight for me. But I beg you, by all the force of our old friendship, not to disquiet her by a single word with regard to this until I give you leave or until three months have gone by. You can tell her when you write that your last news of me was prosperous, and that I am gone abroad upon an enterprise which bids fair to be a happy one. But if I should come back no more—and, though I have no forebodings of evil, that is possible enough—I should like her to know that I did what I could for her, and that I thought my life well spent in her service. If I can do this thing I shall be supremely happy, and if I fail it will be only because I have no longer the power to serve her.’

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He sealed this with great care, addressed it to Armstrong, and locked it in the one drawer in the rickety chest which could be so secured; and then, stripping off his waistcoat, he opened the lining and sewed the medal within it round and round. Since his sojourn in London had begun he had done with his own hands whatever trimming and mending his clothes had required, and his lean fingers had grown as expert with the needle as they were with everything else to which he set them.

He set the waistcoat under his pillow, and laid down his head over the precious talisman it held. His heart was at rest, for, to his own mind, he had already fulfilled his mission. He had spoken of the possibility of failure because, theoretically, it lay as a possibility in the future, but every nerve and fibre denied the chances of disease and death, and he triumphed already. Since Job's death and the flight of Aaron Whittaker had come to heap undeserved miseries upon him, he had never slept so sweetly.

The morning weather was bright like his hopes, and it seemed natural that when Armstrong came to pay his usual Sunday visit that the old man should be radiant.

'Clem, my man,' said Armstrong, noting the new look of resolution and joy which shone in the hunchback's face, 'ye're changed.'

'Yes,' said Clem, 'I am changed.' He looked at the old Scotchman's friendly eyes, and, stretching out both hands to him, he went on with a tender seriousness, 'I have been led in a way I did not know; there are no more dark days in store. God has been good to me.' Armstrong, holding Clem's hands, dropped his head.

'Good to all of us, lad—good to all of us. There are providences that shine in this naughty world like sunlight falling on dark places. I'll have something to tell ye in a week or two, or may be less, will make your heart to sing. Ye mustn't ask me now, I'm bound down by promises, but I've had it in my mind to throw my sacred word of honour to the wind this two months past, and make you as glad as I am myself and as glad as David is. But I mustn't, though I feel as if I were swollen unto the dimensions of a balloon and fit to burst.'

'You have no news so happy or so amazing as mine,' said Clem, 'but I won't ask yours or tell my own until the time comes.'

'I'll bet you,' cried Armstrong, 'I'll bet you—what'll I bet you? I'll bet you the vary finest set o' Staunton pieces and the vary finest imahginable boord that ever the noble game o' chess was played on, that when we come to compare notes ye'll admit that whatsoever news ye've got is no more to be compared to mine than an ant to an elephant. It's just the most majestic and astounding and—— For the Lord's sake, lad, talk o' something else. I've a gaseous accumulation within me will carry me else out o' window, and I'll be coming to wreck against the house-tops.'

'I am glad to hear your news is so good,' Clem answered. He could smile again, it seemed. He could but think—If Armstrong had known, how trivial any piece of good fortune which had befallen him would seem beside the amazing incident of last night. But he kept his own counsel, and they talked of other things.

The talk was serenely happy, except when here and there the older man, who might have been thought likely to be the more sober of the two, broke into some conversational gallop, like a young colt of a fellow whose high spirits set him to race and frolic in the fields of fancy. When the time came for him to go, he shook hands with unusual gravity, and Clem, having his own farewell in mind, would fain have set his arms around the old man's neck and kissed him. They might meet no more; who knew?

He bore the solitude that remained for him, and the time of waiting which remained, tranquilly, and was at perfect peace within. He slept calmly that night, and when morning came he paid his small debts, packed his few belongings, summoned a four-wheeled cab and drove away, carrying the letter to Armstrong with him. He would post that when fairly on his journey, but not before.

The solicitor awaited him with the deed, and he drove to the bank with the cheque he received in exchange for his signature. He bought the best map of the Balkans he could procure, and supplied himself with a revolver, a pocket compass, and a Turkish vocabulary. Theoretically he knew as much about the country as he was likely to want to know, for Mr. Bowling had known in his own way a great deal, and had told all he knew; as, how far up country the railway ran, on what roads carriages could travel, and

at what season the hills were supposed to become inaccessible to travel.

With some sparse provision in the way of winter clothing he started upon his journey. He had never before been out of England, and when he found himself in Calais with some spare hours upon his hands, he strayed about with a strange sense that this first of foreign towns was less foreign than it should have been. He posted his letter to Armstrong here, and as he walked the streets the quaint thin chimes sang to him of the treasure, and when he stood upon the shore the tumbling waves of the Channel had a like burden. He pursued his journey, and the calm which had so far accompanied him began to be clouded by a haze through which he saw nothing with distinctness. The buried gold in those far hills began to seem the only real thing in the world to him. Cologne was a shadow, and Frankfort a shadow, and Vienna was a dream city and no more. The Rhine which had been a lifelong dream to him was still no more than a dream, though he saw it at last in all the splendour of its latest autumn beauty. The constant clank and roll of the carriage and its wheels made themselves into words and called continually 'Gold is buried. In the mountains. Hurry forward. Hurry forward. Gold is buried in the mountains.' It seemed at last that others might hear that exigent monotone as well as he. As the time sped on it sounded more and more plainly in his heart and ears, whether he woke or slept. The sound of traffic in that dream Vienna took up the burden. The steamer that took him down the Danube to Nicopolis whirled its paddles to the same urgent chorus, and beat out upon the rolling waters 'Gold is buried. In the mountains. Hurry forward. You will find it. You will find it. You will find it. Gold is buried in the mountains.' Sea and town and rail and river sang to that measured refrain. The wheels of the rough and springless araba which bore him down to Plevna sang the song in their slow jolt and creak. His horse's lonely footfall as he rode from Plevna southward awoke that maddening, hurrying refrain.

He found everywhere a rough but generous hospitality, and the parting salutation 'Be with God' was always gentle if not always gently spoken. It was the rainy season then, and the roads along the plain were lines of bog running through a quagmire. He had bought a sheepskin coat and cap to protect him from the weather, and so until his speech betrayed him he passed unnoticed. His little knowledge of the language served him well, for it saved



him from questioning and replies. But he learned enough to know that dangers lay before him, and the warnings came thicker and thicker every day. The land was smouldering with insurrection, and every here and there was breaking into flame. And the Government was heaping fire on flame, and now and then experimenting on the possibility of saving a burning town by throwing gunpowder into the midst of it.

But neither this nor his own fast-increasing weakness served to turn him by one hair's-breadth from his purpose. The power of love was on him, and it was no mere treasure of buried gold that lay before him waiting for its resurrection at his hand. It was her soul whom his soul loved. The gold was hers, and her heart should be glad of it. It should bring her a new birth and a new being. All she had loved and longed for in her girlhood—art, music, books, the power to help the poor—waited for her at his coming. It was the thought of her which made his weakness strong, and the hand of love which drew his natural heart of trembling from his breast and set the spirit of a hero there.

He rode on southward, day by day, until the rain ceased, and the clear skies shone out again, precursors of the ice and snow, and still he rode on day by day, scarce conscious of the change. At last he came to Orkhanîè, and knew that he was near the Mecca of his pilgrimage. The tin roof of the village church glittered side by side with the white minaret of the mosque, and the muezzin was sweet with distance. The great hills towered beyond, already touched with the splendours of the sinking sun. He rested at the little khan in the straggling village street, and in the morning he mounted anew and betook him to the hills with a rough pick and a spade strapped before him to his saddle. The pass which leads to Tashkesen wound upward before him, and as he rode on the hills grew sterner and more sombre. A leaden-coloured sky and a piercing wind betokened snow.

When he had travelled some five or six miles along the pass, the winding road, ever rising higher before him, swerved broadly westward, and he knew that he had reached the spot at which he must quit the highway and betake himself to the hills. To the left, winding along the face of the mountain, ran a bridle path. He dismounted and led his horse by this narrow and difficult way. An eager hurry filled his heart and stirred his veins, but he had to pause many times for breath, and it was not until after nearly an hour's climbing that he reached the summit of the mountain,

and could look about him on a scene of savage and desolate grandeur. In spite of the intenseness of his purpose, or perhaps in part because of it, since it was that which strung him to so high a pitch, he paused here, blown through and through with a wild sense of domination, and thrilled by the stern magnificence of the scene. Even here he saw with love's eyes and seemed rather to feel with Sarah's heart than with his own. In some day not far distant these scenes should be open to her, and in them her soul, hitherto imprisoned, should find space to seek what joys she would.

Far below him in the valley gleamed a sulky pool. No other water lay in sight, though he could survey the scene for miles. Already he could distinguish the form of the Baba Konak, and he could see the huge rock that lay beyond the pool. He reached the spot and found the immense moss-grown fragment of rock answer to the outline graved upon the medal. There was little verdure and no underwood about it. He tethered the horse to a dwarf oak at some little distance, and came back to the place bearing the pick and spade with him. The song of the clown in *Hamlet* came into his mind—

A pickaxe and a spade, a spade  
For and a winding sheet  
O, a pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet.

He could think of nothing else but this, yet the words had no clear meaning to him.

The edge of the pool shelved suddenly, and the water lay thirty or forty feet below the top of the bank. The body of the rock was not eight feet from this edge, and it sent out a spur at its centre which reduced the space by two feet further, and seemed to point like a stony finger to the place where the treasure lay buried.

He began to dig, and though his weak strokes made but a slow impression on the soil he laboured as men work when only labour stands between life and death. Suddenly the point of his pick caught something and dragged him forward into the hole. He scrambled to his feet and found that the pick's point was embedded in a broad piece of leather. Seizing the spade he cleared the earth away from this right and left, until it revealed itself as a broad strap connecting two cases of leather. He worked now like a madman, though the force of his strokes grew weaker every

moment. One of the cases at last was cleared, and, seizing the strap, he dragged it up from the place in which it had rested for so many years. When his hold relaxed, as it did from his sheer weakness and excitement, the case fell and toppled open. Within it he could see nothing but mould. He fell upon his knees and explored it with his hands. Earth, and nothing but earth. With failing limbs and a heart that cried aloud of failure he laboured to release the second case. The same failure greeted him, but in dragging out the case he laid bare another leathern band, and his hopes revived and lent him new strength. The second band was connected, in like manner with the first, with two cases of thick leather, and these, like the first, were empty of all but mould. No! What was this? A single English guinea glimmered on the soil.

Clem sat down upon the edge of this grave of his hopes, and his heart died within him. His face drooped down and his hands covered it. The air grew white with falling snow-flakes. The horse broke from his tether and wandered down the valley, cropping here and there. Clem did not know it, and would not have heeded had he known.

He sat upon the edge of the grave his hands had made, and it held no treasure save that of his own soul despoiled and broken. The snow and the night fell together. The flakes grew larger and fell closer. The bleak wind pushed them by and they fled at its rude touch, and whirled helplessly in fantastic circles. But they closed again in a phalanx dense though frail, and fell upon the drooping figure gently, as though they fain would build a cairn to mark the place where so much tenderness and valour lay.

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## CHAPTER VI.

THE dirty Greek who kept the dirtier khan at Orkhaniè stood at his door with his hands tucked into the sleeves of his disreputable sheepskin coat, worn wool inside, and looked at the weather.

‘Athanas,’ he said to his factotum, ‘we shall have snow.’

‘We shall have snow,’ said Athanas in answer, ‘and the pass will be blocked. There is enough snow in the skies to fill up all the chinks in the hills and make a flat level with the top of the Buyuk Balkan.’

A Greek of the lower classes always lies when he can. When

he cannot lie he exaggerates vilely. But beyond a doubt the coming snowstorm would be heavy.

'Who comes here? Three horses,' said the khanjee. 'Hurry in, Athanas. Stir the fire—put on more wood. Light a mangal and set it in the front room. Sheitan git, giaour! Thou art slow as a worm.'

The foreigners in interior Turkey call each other foreigner by way of contempt, after the manner of the dwellers in the land wherein they sojourn.

A carriage with three horses came dashing wildly into the street ricocheting and rocketing from the broken pavement in an alarming manner. The driver was a turbaned Turk, with a swaggering belly-band crammed full of pistols and daggers with curiously ornamented hilts of ancient silver. Seated within the carriage were three people, two men and a woman. One of the men was fat and round and young. The other was shrivelled and old and grey. The woman was young and lovely, and wore an aspect of simple and unconscious majesty.

'Ask if he has passed,' said the grey man in English.

'Stop!' cried the fat man in Turkish, and the driver dragged the horses on to their haunches before the door of the khan. Then in Greek, reading the khanjee's nationality at a glance, he said, 'Has an Englishman passed through the village to-day? A little crook-backed man dressed in a sheepskin cap and cloak?'

'He left on horseback this morning,' said the khanjee, standing bareheaded. 'He took the pass for Tashkesen. He will be there by now.'

The fat man put this rapidly into English. The grey man and his female companion looked at each other.

'Thank God!' she said. 'We are in time.'

'Ask him if he knows the Baba Konak,' said the male traveller. Yes, the Greek knew it well, and pointed to the hills. 'Ask him if he knows the pool at the south of it.' Yes, he knew the pool. 'Ask him how far it is.'

'Eight miles,' was the interpreter's answer, 'but four hours' hard travelling.'

'We must go on at once,' said the grey man's companion. 'There will be a snowstorm. He may be lost upon the hills.'

'Will you guide us?' asked the interpreter. 'Now? At once?'

'No,' said the khanjee, 'there will be snow. See, it is falling already. It will be night in two hours' time.' The interpreter translated this response.

'Sarah, my lass,' said the grey man, 'we must go on. It's growing into a mere matter o' life an' death to the lad.'

'Yes,' she said, 'we must go on. Surely there are some men here who will venture to the hills.'

'A hundred,' said the dragoman; 'but not Christians, and, very assuredly, not Greeks.'

'Get men,' she said appealingly. 'Get torches and lanterns. Let us carry wood in the carriage to make a fire. How far can we go in the carriage?'

The dragoman demanded—'How far on the road to the pool at the foot of the Baba Konak can we go with the carriage?'

'An hour and a half,' said the Greek sulkily. He had expected customers, and was getting nothing but questions.

'Is the road good?'

'Good enough.'

'Tell him,' said the grey man, 'to find half a dozen strong lads who are willing to go into the hills. Promise them a golden lira apiece. Tell him if we can start in twenty minutes he shall have one for himself.'

The dragoman transferred this to the Greek, but turned the lira into a beshlek, which is a quarter of its value. The Greek sped away as hard as he could go.

'You will stay here and wait for us, grandfather,' said Sarah. 'We shall find him. But,' the tears sprang to her lovely grey eyes, 'he will have broken his heart before we reach him.'

'I'll not stop here and wait for ye,' said Armstrong, 'but I'll go with ye. Do ye think I'm that auld an' donnert I can't bear an hour or two's cold in a cause like this?'

'Grandfather! you would be mad to go.'

'Mad or not,' said Armstrong, 'I'll go, and when I can go no further I'll e'en stop where I find myself, but I'll never stop while I can lift a foot till we find him live or dead.'

'What kind of road is it from here to the pool at the south foot of the Baba Konak?' asked the dragoman of Athanas.

'Up the wall of a house a mile high,' said Athanas, 'and down a wall a mile high.'

'He says,' translated the dragoman, 'that it is not a good road. Is there a path?' he asked. Athanas not seeing his way

either to lie or to magnify, contented himself with a nod. 'Have you travelled by it?'

'Twenty thousand times,' said Athanas.

'Can a woman do it?' Athanas nodded his head once more.

'The road is not good,' said the interpreter, 'but he says he has travelled by it once or twice himself, and a lady will not find it too hard.'

'No woman will do it to-night,' said Athanas, 'and no woman will do it again until after the spring rains. The snow will be yards deep in an hour.'

To this the dragoman made no response, but descending demanded a glass of mastica, and warmed his hands and feet at the stove.

'I was sore afraid,' said Armstrong, 'that we should never get near him. That heart-breaking four days it cost us to borrow the money! One would have thought that when that advertisement had been issued in the *Times* day after day for a week, and when already ye'd spent nigh every penny of your substance, ye'd have shown bona fides enough. And there's no other claimant to come for the money. How can there be when you're your father's only child, and he left ye every farthing he had in the world? I think the folk that have money value it more than those that haven't, though a man might fancy the contrary to be the fact. By the time we win back, lass, ye'll be a great lady and have a great fortune. Never harden your heart to the prayers o' the poor. When ye can lend in a good cause don't want to be too sure o' being paid back again.'

He had other things to think of, but he preferred to talk of anything rather than suffer his thoughts to rest upon the horror which waited persistently at their centre.

'That lonely lake,' he had said to himself a hundred times, 'would tempt a broken heart in solitude.' He expelled that thought again and again, but it refused to be banished. 'The dark days he talked of,' thought Armstrong, with a terror-stricken spirit, 'when his own mind played the part of the patient man's wife to him. "Curse God and die," said the wife of the patient man.'

What could he do in such a case but lift a heart of trembling trust to Heaven?

'Monsieur Bruyksdaal,' cried Sarah to the dragoman, 'the men are coming. Can we get firewood? There will be dry brush-

wood on the hills. Perhaps if we could make a great fire the horses might be able to wait near it; they would die in the cold. And can you get blankets? They may be needed.'

'Madame,' said the dragoman, 'whatever you wish shall be done.'

The khanjee came down the street with half a dozen gesticulating Turks about him. One bore a lighted torch, though as yet it was but dusk, and all the rest carried torches in readiness. The final preparations were made, the dragoman climbed back to the carriage, and the party set out. The snow fell like a veil, and in an hour the road was so carpeted that only the jangling bells of the horses told the ear that the carriage moved. Half an hour later it was dark, and the torch shone wild on the wild figures, the circle of dazzling snowflakes, and the ringed wall of darkness.

They reached at last the bridle-path by which Clem had ascended eight hours earlier.

'You will be away five hours,' said the driver. 'It would be death to the horses to stay here. I will return to Orkhaniè, but if I can come back I will. If I cannot get back to you I could not descend from here, and I should be useless whether I stayed or no. And if I stayed the horses would die.'

The dragoman translated, and Armstrong and Sarah were compelled to see the truth of the statement.

'You must go back, grandfather,' she said. 'I am young and strong, and with these men I am not afraid. They are brave men. I can see it in their eyes. They know the hills.'

'I'll go where you go,' said Armstrong, doggedly, but the dragoman intervened.

'This poor old man,' he said in Turkish, 'is as brave as a lion, but he cannot climb the hills; yet he vows he will go. The woman is as fit as any of you to go anywhere. Look at her. And she will go. But you must stop the old man. Tell him he will delay you and that you will not take him.'

Straightway the whole body of Turks declared that they would not budge upon the mountain road with Armstrong, and the interpreter turned into English the reasons with which he himself had inspired them.

'Then go in God's name,' said the old man, 'and leave me here. Start away. Tell this black-avised scoon'rel here wi' the knives and firearms to make a fire, and here I stay. I'll not go back again. I'll just wait here an' say my prayers till ye return.'



Ye can leave a heathen with me if ye see fit, but here I stay . . .  
I'll take no harm at all.'

Since he would consent to nothing less than this, and it was undoubtedly a better thing to stay at once than to exhaust himself and give the men who were with him another burden, Sarah consented. A man was told off to keep watch with him, and he and the arabajee set to work to make a great fire, beside which the old man, buried in rugs and sheepskins, sat him down. Whilst the fire was making he watched the torch until the glistening veil of snow had hidden it from his sight. Then, the fire being built, the arabajee drove away, and the horses' bells went tinkling into the darkness and the snow, until they too seemed swallowed up in night and silence.

'It is very good of you to come with me, Monsieur Bruyksdaal,' said Sarah, as she and the dragoman climbed the hill together.

'Pardon me, madame,' he said, 'if I say that I am delighted. I have never seen a lady so brave and so devoted. I am happy in serving you.'

'Will they find the way?' she asked him. 'I can see nothing.' He laughed.

'I would find the way myself if I had travelled it but once,' he said. 'These men are not mountaineers, but that is only because they have no mountains in this land. I was born in sight of the Matterhorn, and these Balkans are no more than a set of molehills after the Alps. Follow my steps, madame. Before I came to Vienna to be a courier I was a mountain guide at home. I grew too fat upon it, but I am equal to the passage of the Balkans. You know your way?' he asked in Turkish of the nearest man.

'He who does not know his way,' said the Turk, 'had better hang himself before starting to find Baba Konak on a night like this.'

How they found their way was a wonder to any less accustomed than themselves. There were three torches alight by this time, hissing and flaring in the falling snow, but the darkness gathered round so close that they could scarce see a yard on either side, and the snowflakes, in their swift transition from dark to light, so dazzled on the eyes that Sarah often found her feet invisible and the pathway a mere hollow blank of darkness.

'You are tired, madame?' asked the dragoman. 'Shall we rest a little while?'

'No,' she answered, 'go on. I am not tired.' She said within herself, 'I shall not be tired until we find you, Clem. I shall never weary till we find you.'

'We have reached the top?' he asked one of their companions in a while.

'Yes.'

'The descent is easier?'

'A plain road.'

They ploughed on through the falling snow, for how long she knew not. All her senses were dazzled, like her eyes. Her wet garments clung heavily about her, yet she felt no fatigue or discomfort. There was no tumult of doubt in her mind—no hope and no fear. She walked as if in a dream in the dancing torch-light and the pitch dark and the dazzling snow, with the wild figures before and behind and on either side.

'We are near?' asked the dragoman.

'Very near,' one answered him.

'Between the pool and the rock,' he said; and then they plodded on again in silence. All at once they paused, and one sent forth a wild cry.

'This is fresh earth,' said the man who had called aloud, kicking aside the snow, and holding his torch to the ground. He called aloud a second time, but at that instant Sarah shrieked, and leapt into the grave Clem's hands had made, and, kneeling by a fallen figure there obscured with snow, set her strong arms about it and lifted it.

'Clem!' she cried; 'Clem!'

The half-melted snow lay in patches on his hair and face. She clutched his hands and they were cold, but not with the chill of death. She took him to her bosom and rocked him there, and wept over him, crying again and again upon his name. 'Clem! dear Clem! To have loved me so—to have broken your heart for this. So weak—so brave—so strong at heart. And to have loved me so!'

They drew him from her and bared his breast and arms, and rubbed him with snow until his frozen skin grew hot beneath the constant friction. The dragoman slipped a flask of brandy into Sarah's hands.

'You would like to be doing something,' he said. 'A little—a very little at a time.'

She knelt down in the snow at his head and poured a few

drops of brandy at brief intervals between his lips, and by-and-by the blood began to mantle in his face, and his lips to breathe faint sighs. Then they moved and she bent her ear.

'Rainbow Gold,' he sighed.

'No,' she said, and took him to her breast again as if he had been a child. 'You brought a greater treasure here than ever you could hope to find.'

What raptures caught him when he opened his eyes and saw her face so near to his, and felt her warm kisses and her warmer tears upon his cheek and brow, were told thereafter, but to one ear and heart alone.

The bearded brown-faced man who waited with Armstrong in the pass fed the fire often, and in the intervals kept himself warm either by cutting brushwood or by walking up and down. The flames leaped and curled and the snow fell hissing into them minute after minute, hour after hour, until the time of waiting seemed longer to the grey old man than all the years of his life. But at last, when it seemed as if the very end of the world had grown near, his fellow-watcher touched him on the shoulder and pointed down the pass. He listened and could hear the sound of bells. Again his fellow-watcher touched him and pointed to the mountain path.

'Voices!' he said; 'they are coming.' Armstrong understood the tone and gesture and rose to his feet. A minute later the dragoman's voice broke on the silence, and he came dancing down the path at the imminent risk of his neck and jodeling with all his might.

'Found!' he roared, when he saw the fire. 'Alive, and safe!'

The backward drive through the night and the snow, with Clem's packed figure lying in the carriage and Sarah's arm about it, was a thing to be remembered for a lifetime. All hearts were too full for many words, and such as were spoken were passionate and incoherent.

'I have died already,' Clem's cold lips made shift to murmur, 'and I have waked in Heaven!'

It snowed for many days, and an English heiress and her lover were weatherbound in a comfortless caravanserai in Bulgaria. But to be free in Elysian fields could have made them no happier.

People said at home, when the two returned and were married, that a beauty with a hundred thousand pounds to her fortune

might have run a less distance and brought home a better husband, but said Armstrong—

‘There’s a deal of vowing and sighing recorded in the poets that makes pleasant reading even for a foolish auld fellow like me, that ought, no doubt, to be thinking o’ wiser things. They’re pretty ready to die for the damsel as a general rule, but here’s a man that never breathed a word o’ courtship in his life, but just went straight away and died for the lass he loved. And a lad that’ll do that—if ye can but get him into a marriageable state again, which I allow to be a problem—is a lad that’s worth any lass’s marrying.’



THE END.

